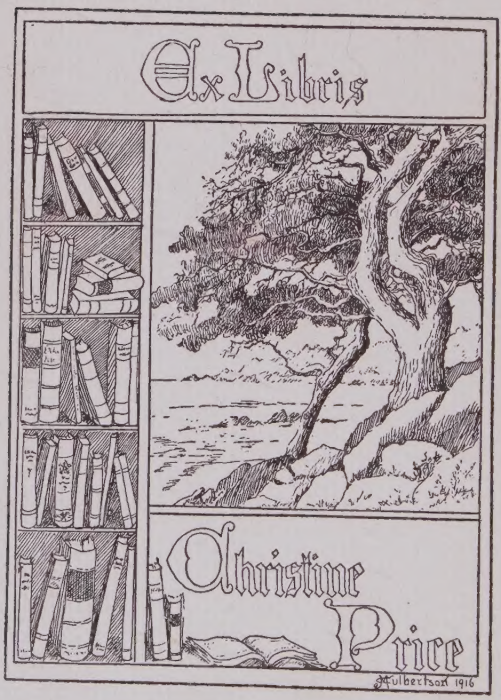
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Selected Poems

By JOHN MASEFIELD

Gallipoli
King Cole
The Dream
Right Royal
The Faithful
Lost Endeavor
Selected Poems
A Mainsail Haul
Captain Margaret
Melloney Holtspur
The Daffodil Fields
The Old Front Line
Esther and Berenice
Multitude and Solitude
The War and the Future
Enslaved and Other Poems
Collected Poems and Plays
Good Friday and Other Poems
Salt-Water Poems and Ballads
Philip the King and Other Poems
The Tragedy of Pompey the Great
Lollingdon Downs and Other Poems
The Tragedy of Man and Other Plays
Reynard the Fox, or The Ghost of Heath Run
The Story of a Round-House and Other Poems
The Locked Chest and The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight
The Everlasting Mercy and The Widow in the Bye Street

W. Strang
Jan. 1912
John Masefield.

Selected Poems

By

John Masefield

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1923

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Set up and electrotyped. Published March, 1923.

TO
MY WIFE

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Selected Poems

Selections from

SALT-WATER BALLADS

TRADE WINDS

In the harbour, in the island, in the Spanish Seas,
Are the tiny white houses and the orange-trees,
And day-long, night-long, the cool and pleasant breeze
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

There is the red wine, the nutty Spanish ale,
The shuffle of the dancers, the old salt's tale,
The squeaking fiddle, and the soughing in the sail
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

And at nights there's fire-flies and the yellow moon,
And in the ghostly palm-trees the sleepy tune
Of the quiet voice calling me, the long low croon
Of the steady Trade Winds blowing.

SEA-FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the
lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer
her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song
and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey
dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call
of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be
denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white
clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume,
and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again to the
vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where
the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing
fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the
long trick's over.

PRAYER

When the last sea is sailed and the last shallow charted,
When the last field is reaped and the last harvest stored,
When the last fire is out and the last guest departed,
Grant the last prayer that I shall pray, Be good to me, O Lord!

And let me pass in a night at sea, a night of storm and thunder,
In the loud crying of the wind through sail and rope and spar;
Send me a ninth great peaceful wave to drown and roll me under
To the cold tunny-fishes' home where the drowned galleons are.

And in the dim green quiet place far out of sight and hearing,
Grant I may hear at whiles the wash and thresh of the sea-foam
About the fine keen bows of the stately clippers steering
Towards the lone northern star and the fair ports of home.

THE WEST WIND

It's a warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind but tears are in my eyes.
For it comes from the west lands, the old brown hills,
And April's in the west wind, and daffodils.

It's a fine land, the west land, for hearts as tired as mine,
Apple orchards blossom there, and the air's like wine.
There is cool green grass there, where men may lie at rest,
And the thrushes are in song there, fluting from the nest.

"Will you not come home, brother? you have been long away,
It's April, and blossom time, and white is the spray;
And bright is the sun, brother, and warm is the rain,
Will you not come home, brother, home to us again?

"The young corn is green, brother, where the rabbits run,
It's blue sky, and white clouds, and warm rain and sun.

It's song to a man's soul, brother, fire to a man's brain,
To hear the wild bees and see the merry spring again.

"Larks are singing in the west, brother, above the green wheat,
So will ye not come home, brother, and rest your tired feet?
I've a balm for bruised hearts, brother, sleep for aching eyes,"
Says the warm wind, the west wind, full of birds' cries.

Selections from
POEMS AND BALLADS

CARGOES

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-
stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad
March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

AN OLD SONG RE-SUNG

I saw a ship a-sailing, a-sailing, a-sailing,
With emeralds and rubies and sapphires in
her hold;
And a bosun in a blue coat bawling at the
railing,
Piping through a silver call that had a chain
of gold;
The summer wind was failing and the tall
ship rolled.

I saw a ship a-steering, a-steering, a-steering,
With roses in red thread worked upon her
sails;
With sacks of purple amethysts, the spoils
of buccaneering,
Skins of musky yellow wine, and silks in
bales,
Her merry men were cheering, hauling on the
brails.

I saw a ship a-sinking, a-sinking, a-sinking,
With glittering sea-water splashing on her decks,
With seamen in her spirit-room singing songs and drinking,
Pulling claret bottles down, and knocking off the necks,
The broken glass was chinking as she sank among the wrecks.

TWILIGHT

Twilight it is, and the far woods are dim, and the rooks cry and call.
Down in the valley the lamps, and the mist, and a star over all,
There by the rick, where they thresh, is the drone at an end,
Twilight it is, and I travel the road with my friend.

I think of the friends who are dead, who were dear long ago in the past,
Beautiful friends who are dead, though I know that death cannot last;
Friends with the beautiful eyes that the dust has defiled,
Beautiful souls who were gentle when I was a child.

INVOCATION

O wanderer into many brains,
O spark the emperor's purple hides,
You sow the dusk with fiery grains
When the gold horseman rides.
    O beauty on the darkness hurled,
    Be it through me you shame the world.

A CREED

I held that when a person dies
  His soul returns again to earth;
Arrayed in some new flesh-disguise
  Another mother gives him birth.
With sturdier limbs and brighter brain
The old soul takes the roads again.

Such was my own belief and trust;
  This hand, this hand that holds the pen,
Has many a hundred times been dust
  And turned, as dust, to dust again;
These eyes of mine have blinked and shone
In Thebes, in Troy, in Babylon.

All that I rightly think or do,
  Or make, or spoil, or bless, or blast,
Is curse or blessing justly due
  For sloth or effort in the past.
My life's a statement of the sum
Of vice indulged, or overcome.

I know that in my lives to be
  My sorry heart will ache and burn,
And worship, unavailingly,
  The woman whom I used to spurn,
And shake to see another have
The love I spurned, the love she gave.

And I shall know, in angry words,
  In gibes, and mocks, and many a tear,
A carrion flock of homing-birds,
  The gibes and scorns I uttered here.
The brave word that I failed to speak
Will brand me dastard on the cheek.

And as I wander on the roads
  I shall be helped and healed and blessed;
Dear words shall cheer and be as goads
  To urge to heights before unguessed.
My road shall be the road I made;
All that I gave shall be repaid.

So shall I fight, so shall I tread,
  In this long war beneath the stars;
So shall a glory wreathe my head,
  So shall I faint and show the scars,
Until this case, this clogging mould,
Be smithied all to kingly gold.

WHEN BONY DEATH

When bony Death has chilled her gentle
blood,
And dimmed the brightness of her wistful
eyes,
And changed her glorious beauty into mud
By his old skill in hateful wizardries;

When an old lichened marble strives to tell
How sweet a grace, how red a lip was hers;
When rheumy grey-beards say, "I knew her
well,"
Showing the grave to curious worshippers;

When all the roses that she sowed in me
Have dripped their crimson petals and
decayed,
Leaving no greenery on any tree
That her dear hands in my heart's garden
laid,

Then grant, old Time, to my green mould-
ering skull,
These songs may keep her memory beautiful.

THE DEATH ROOMS

My soul has many an old decaying room
Hung with the ragged arras of the past,
Where startled faces flicker in the gloom,
And horrid whispers set the cheek aghast.

Those dropping rooms are haunted by a death,
A something like a worm gnawing a brain,
That bids me heed what bitter lesson saith
The blind wind beating on the window-pane.

None dwells in those old rooms: none ever can:
I pass them through at night with hidden head;
Lock'd rotting rooms her eyes must never scan,
Floors that her blessed feet must never tread.

Haunted old rooms: rooms she must never know,
Where death-ticks knock and mouldering panels glow.

C. L. M.

In the dark womb where I began
My mother's life made me a man.
Through all the months of human birth
Her beauty fed my common earth.
I cannot see, nor breathe, nor stir,
But through the death of some of her.

Down in the darkness of the grave
She cannot see the life she gave.
For all her love, she cannot tell
Whether I use it ill or well,

Nor knock at dusty doors to find
Her beauty dusty in the mind.

If the grave's gates could be undone,
She would not know her little son,
I am so grown. If we should meet
She would pass by me in the street,
Unless my soul's face let her see
My sense of what she did for me.

What have I done to keep in mind
My debt to her and womankind?
What woman's happier life repays
Her for those months of wretched days?
For all my mouthless body leeched
Ere Birth's releasing hell was reached?

What have I done, or tried, or said
In thanks to that dear woman dead?
Men triumph over women still,
Men trample women's rights at will,
And man's lust roves the world untamed.

* * * *

O grave, keep shut lest I be shamed.

WASTE

No rose but fades: no glory but must pass:
No hue but dims: no precious silk but frets.
Her beauty must go underneath the grass,
Under the long roots of the violets.

O, many glowing beauties Time has hid
In that dark, blotting box the villain sends.
He covers over with a coffin-lid
Mothers and sons, and foes and lovely friends.

Maids that were redly-lipped and comely-skinned,
Friends that deserved a sweeter bed than clay.
All are as blossoms blowing down the wind,
Things the old envious villain sweeps away.

And though the mutterer laughs and church bells toll,
Death brings another April to the soul.

THE WILD DUCK

Twilight; red in the west;
Dimness; a glow on the wood.
The teams plod home to rest.
The wild duck come to glean.
O souls not understood,
What a wild cry in the pool;
What things have the farm ducks seen
That they cry so, huddle and cry?
Only the soul that goes,
Eager, eager, flying,
Over the globe of the moon,
Over the wood that glows;

Wings linked; necks a-strain,
A rush and a wild crying.

* * * *

A cry of the long pain
In the reeds of a steel lagoon
In a land that no man knows.

Selections from

POMPEY THE GREAT

CHORUS

Man is a sacred city, built of marvellous earth.
Life was lived nobly here to give this body birth.
Something was in this brain and in this eager hand.
Death is so dumb and blind, Death cannot understand.
Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory.
Death makes women a dream and men a traveller's story,
Death drives the lovely soul to wander under the sky,
Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

CHORUS

Kneel to the beautiful women who bear us this strange brave fruit.

Man with his soul so noble: man half god
and half brute.
Women bear him in pain that he may bring
them tears.
He is a king on earth, he rules for a term of
years.
And the conqueror's prize is dust and lost
endeavour.
And the beaten man becomes a story for ever.
For the gods employ strange means to bring
their will to be.
We are in the wise gods' hands and more we
cannot see.

Epilogue

And all their passionate hearts are dust,
And dust the great idea that burned
In various flames of love and lust
Till the world's brain was turned.

God, moving darkly in men's brains,
Using their passions as his tool,
Brings freedom with a tyrant's chains
And wisdom with the fool.

Blindly and bloodily we drift,
Our interests clog our hearts with dreams.
God make my brooding soul a rift
Through which a meaning gleams.

Selections from

THE EVERLASTING MERCY

THE SCALLENGE

The moonlight shone on Cabbage Walk,
It made the limestone look like chalk.
It was too late for any people,
Twelve struck as we went by the steeple.
A dog barked, and an owl was calling,
The squire's brook was still a-falling,
The carved heads on the church looked down
On "Russell, Blacksmith of this Town,"
And all the graves of all the ghosts
Who rise on Christmas Eve in hosts
To dance and carol in festivity
For joy of Jesus Christ's Nativity
(Bell-ringer Dawe and his two sons
Beheld 'em from the bell-tower once),
Two and two about about
Singing the end of Advent out.

All the old monks' singing places
Glimmered quick with flitting faces,
Singing anthems, singing hymns
Under carven cherubims.
Ringer Dawe aloft could mark
Faces at the window dark

Crowding, crowding, row on row,
Till all the Church began to glow.
The chapel glowed, the nave, the choir,
All the faces became fire
Below the eastern window high
To see Christ's star come up the sky.
Then they lifted hands and turned,
And all their lifted fingers burned,
Burned like the golden altar tallows,
Burned like a troop of God's own Hallows,
Bringing to mind the burning time
When all the bells will rock and chime
And burning saints on burning horses
Will sweep the planets from their courses
And loose the stars to burn up night.
Lord, give us eyes to bear the light.

We all went quiet down the Scallenge
Lest Police Inspector Drew should challenge.
But 'Spector Drew was sleeping sweet,
His head upon a charges sheet,
Under the gas jet flaming full,
Snorting and snoring like a bull,
His bull cheeks puffed, his bull lips blowing,
His ugly yellow front teeth showing.
Just as we peeped we saw him fumble
And scratch his head, and shift, and mumble.

Down in the lane so thin and dark
The tan-yards stank of bitter bark,

The curate's pigeons gave a flutter,
A cat went courting down the gutter,
And none else stirred a foot or feather.
The houses put their heads together,
Talking, perhaps, so dark and sly,
Of all the folk they'd seen go by,
Children, and men and women, merry all,
Who'd some day pass that way to burial.

Epilogue

How swift the summer goes,
Forget-me-not, pink, rose.
The young grass when I started
And now the hay is carted,
And now my song is ended,
And all the summer spended;
The blackbird's second brood
Routs beech leaves in the wood;
The pink and rose have speeded,
Forget-me-not has seeded
Only the winds that blew,
The rain that makes things new,
The earth that hides things old,
And blessings manifold.

O lovely lily clean,
O lily springing green,
O lily bursting white,
Dear lily of delight,
Spring in my heart agen
That I may flower to men.

Selections from

THE WIDOW IN THE BYE STREET

THE END

Some of life's sad ones are too strong to die,
Grief doesn't kill them as it kills the weak,
Sorrow is not for those who sit and cry
Lapped in the love of turning t'other cheek,
But for the noble souls austere and bleak
Who have had the bitter dose and drained the cup
And wait for Death face fronted, standing up.

As the last man upon the sinking ship,
Seeing the brine creep brightly on the deck,
Hearing aloft the slatting topsails rip.
Ripping to rags among the topmast's wreck,
Yet hoists the new red ensign without speck,
That she, so fair, may sink with colours flying,
So the old widowed mother kept from dying.

She tottered home, back to the little room.
It was all over for her, but for life;
She drew the blinds, and trembled in the gloom;
"I sat here thus when I was wedded wife;
Sorrow sometimes, and joy; but always strife.
Struggle to live except just at the last,
O God, I thank Thee for the mercies past.

"Harry, my man, when we were courting; eh . . .
The April morning up the Cony-gree.
How grand he looked upon our wedding day.
'I wish we'd had the bells,' he said to me;
And we'd the moon that evening, I and he,
And dew come wet, oh, I remember how,
And we come home to where I'm sitting now.

"And he lay dead here, and his son was born here;
He never saw his little son, his little Jim.
And now I'm all alone here, left to mourn here,
And there are all his clothes, but never him.
He's down under the prison in the dim,
With quicklime working on him to the bone,
The flesh I made with many and many a groan.

"And then he ran so, he was strong at running,
Always a strong one, like his dad at that.
In summertimes I done my sewing sunning,
And he'd be sprawling, playing with the cat.
And neighbours brought their knitting out to chat
Till five o'clock; he had his tea at five;
How sweet life was when Jimmy was alive."

And sometimes she will walk the cindery mile,
Singing, as she and Jimmy used to do,

Singing, "The parson's dog lep over a stile,"
Along the path where water lilies grew.
The stars are placid on the evening's blue,
Burning like eyes so calm, so unafraid.
On all that God has given and man has made.

Burning they watch, and mothlike owls come out,
The redbreast warbles shrilly once and stops;
The homing cowman gives his dog a shout,
The lamps are lighted in the village shops.
Silence; the last bird passes; in the copse
The hazels cross the moon, a nightjar spins,
Dew wets the grass, the nightingale begins.

Singing her crazy song the mother goes,
Singing as though her heart were full of peace,
Moths knock the petals from the dropping rose,
Stars make the glimmering pool a golden fleece,
The moon droops west, but still she does not cease,
The little mice peep out to hear her sing,
Until the inn-man's cockerel shakes his wing.

And in the sunny days of hot Julys,
The labourers going to the meadow see her there.

Rubbing the sleep out of their heavy eyes
They lean upon the parapet to stare;
They see her plaiting basil in her hair,
Basil, the dark red wound-wort, cops of clover,
The blue self-heal and golden Jacks of Dover.

Dully they watch her, then they turn to go
To that high Shropshire upland of late hay;
Her singing lingers with them as they mow,
And many times they try it, now grave, now gay,
Till, with full throat, over the hills away,
They lift it clear; oh, very clear it towers
Mixed with the swish of many falling flowers.

Selections from

DAUBER

THE SETTING OF THE WATCH

Darker it grew, still darker, and the stars
Burned golden, and the fiery fishes came.
The wire-note loudened from the straining spars;
The sheet-blocks clacked together always the same;
The rushing fishes streaked the seas with flame,

Racing the one speed noble as their own:
What unknown joy was in those fish unknown!

Names in the darkness passed and voices cried;
The red spark glowed and died, the faces seemed
As things remembered when a brain has died,
To all but high intensities deeply dreamed.
Like hissing spears the fishes' fire streamed,
And on the clipper rushed with tossing mast,
A bath of flame broke round her as she passed.

The watch was set, the night came, and the men
Hid from the moon in shadowed nooks to sleep,
Bunched like the dead; still, like the dead, as when
Plague in a city leaves none even to weep.
The ship's track brightened to a mile-broad sweep;
The mate there felt her pulse, and eyed the spars:
South-west by south she staggered under the stars.

Down in his bunk the Dauber lay awake
Thinking of his unfitness for the sea.
Each failure, each derision, each mistake,
There in the life not made for such as he;
A morning grim with trouble sure to be,
A noon of pain from failure, and a night
Bitter with men's contemning and despite.

This in the first beginning, the green leaf,
Still in the Trades before bad weather fell;
What harvest would he reap of hate and grief
When the loud Horn made every life a hell?
When the sick ship lay over, clanging her bell,
And no time came for painting or for drawing,
But all hands fought, and icy death came clawing?

The green bunk curtains moved, the brass rings clicked,
The Cook cursed in his sleep, turning and turning,
The moonbeam's moving finger touched and picked,
And all the stars in all the sky were burning.
"This is the art I've come for, and am learning,

The sea and ships and men and traveling
things.
It is most proud, whatever pain it brings."

He leaned upon his arm and watched the light
Sliding and fading to the steady roll;
This he would some day paint, the ship at
night,
And sleeping seamen tired to the soul;
The space below the bunks as black as coal,
Gleams upon chests, upon the unlit lamp,
The ranging door-hook, and the locker clamp.

This he would paint, and that, and all these
scenes,
And proud ships carrying on, and men their
minds,
And blues of rollers toppling into greens,
And shattering into white that bursts and
blinds,
And scattering ships running erect like hinds,
And men in oilskins beating down a sail
High on the yellow yard, in snow, in hail,

With faces ducked down from the slanting
drive
Of half-thawed hail mixed with half-frozen
spray,
The roaring canvas, like a thing alive,
Shaking the mast, knocking their hands away,

The foot-ropes jerking to the tug and sway,
The savage eyes salt-reddened at the rims,
And icicles on the south-wester brims.

And sunnier scenes would grow under his brush,
The tropic dawn with all things dropping dew,
The darkness and the wonder and the hush,
The insensate grey before the marvel grew;
Then the veil lifted from the trembling blue,
The walls of sky burst in, the flower, the rose,
All the expanse of heaven a mind that glows.

He turned out of his bunk; the Cook still tossed,
One of the other two spoke in his sleep,
A cockroach scuttled where the moonbeam crossed;
Outside there was the ship, the night, the deep.
"It is worth while," the youth said; "I will keep
To my resolve, I'll learn to paint all this.
My Lord, my God, how beautiful it is!"

Outside was the ship's rush to the wind's hurry,
A resonant wire-hum from every rope,
The broadening bow-wash in a fiery flurry,

The leaning masts in their majestic slope,
And all things strange with moonlight: filled
with hope
By all that beauty going as man bade,
He turned and slept in peace. Eight bells
were made.

THE HORN

Even now they shifted suits of sails; they
bent
The storm-suit ready for the expected time;
The mighty wester that the Plate had lent
Had brought them far into the wintry clime.
At dawn, out of the shadow, there was rime,
The dim Magellan Clouds were frosty clear,
The wind had edge, the testing-time was near.

And then he wondered if the tales were lies
Told by old hands to terrify the new,
For, since the ship left England, only twice
Had there been need to start a sheet or clew,
Then only royals, for an hour or two,
And no seas broke aboard, nor was it cold.
What were these gales of which the stories
told?

The thought went by. He had heard the
Bosun tell
Too often, and too fiercely, not to know

That being off the Horn in June is hell:
Hell of continual toil in ice and snow,
Frostbitten hell in which the westers blow
Shrieking for days on end, in which the seas
Gulf the starved seamen till their marrows freeze.

Such was the weather he might look to find,
Such was the work expected: there remained
Firmly to set his teeth, resolve his mind,
And be the first, however much it pained,
And bring his honour round the Horn unstained,
And win his mates' respect; and thence, untainted,
Be ranked as a man however much he painted.

He drew deep breath; a gantline swayed aloft
A lower topsail, hard with rope and leather,
Such as men's frozen fingers fight with oft
Below the Ramirez in Cape Horn weather.
The arms upon the yard hove all together,
Lighting the head along; a thought occurred
Within the painter's brain like a bright bird:

That this, and so much like it, of man's toil,
Compassed by naked manhood in strange places,
Was all heroic, but outside the coil
Within which modern art gleams or grimaces;

That if he drew that line of sailors' faces
Sweating the sail, their passionate play and change,
It would be new, and wonderful, and strange.

That that was what his work meant; it would be
A training in new vision, a revealing
Of passionate men in battle with the sea,
High on an unseen stage, shaking and reeling;
And men through him would understand their feeling,
Their might, their misery, their tragic power,
And all by suffering pain a little hour;

High on the yard with them, feeling their pain,
Battling with them; and it had not been done.
He was a door to new worlds in the brain,
A window opening letting in the sun,
A voice saying, "Thus is bread fetched and ports won,
And life lived out at sea where men exist
Solely by man's strong brain and sturdy wrist."

So he decided, as he cleaned his brasses,
Hearing without, aloft, the curse, the shout
Where the taut gantline passes and repasses,
Heaving new topsails to be lighted out.

It was most proud, however self might doubt,
To share man's tragic toil and paint it true.
He took the offered Fate: this he would do.

That night the snow fell between six and seven,
A little feathery fall so light, so dry,
An aimless dust out of a confused heaven,
Upon an air no steadier than a sigh;
The powder dusted down and wandered by
So purposeless, so many, and so cold,
Then died, and the wind ceased and the ship rolled—

Rolled till she clanged, rolled till the brain was tired,
Marking the acme of the heavens, the pause
While the sea-beauty rested and respired,
Drinking great draughts of roller at her hawse.
Flutters of snow came aimless upon flaws.
"Lock up your paints," the Mate said, speaking light:
"This is the Horn; you'll join my watch to-night!"

THE SOUTH-WEST WIND

All through the windless night the clipper rolled
In a great swell with oily gradual heaves

Which rolled her down until her time-bells
tolled,
Clang, and the weltering water moaned like
beeves.
The thundering rattle of slatting shook the
sheaves,
Startles of water made the swing ports gush,
The sea was moaning and sighing and saying
"Hush!"

It was all black and starless. Peering down
Into the water, trying to pierce the gloom,
One saw a dim, smooth, oily glitter of brown
Heaving and dying away and leaving room
For yet another. Like the march of doom
Came those great powers of marching
silences;
Then fog came down, dead-cold, and hid the
seas.

They set the Dauber to the foghorn. There
He stood upon the poop, making to sound
Out of the pump the sailors' nasal blare,
Listening lest ice should make the note
resound.
She bayed there like a solitary hound
Lost in a covert; all the watch she bayed.
The fog, come closelier down, no answer
made.

Denser it grew, until the ship was lost.
The elemental hid her; she was merged
In mufflings of dark death, like a man's ghost,
New to the change of death, yet thither urged.
Then from the hidden waters something surged—
Mournful, despairing, great, greater than speech,
A noise like one slow wave on a still beach.

Mournful, and then again mournful, and still
Out of the night that mighty voice arose;
The Dauber at his foghorn felt the thrill.
Who rode that desolate sea? What forms were those?
Mournful, from things defeated, in the throes
Of memory of some conquered hunting-ground,
Out of the night of death arose the sound.

"Whales!" said the mate. They stayed there all night long
Answering the horn. Out of the night they spoke,
Defeated creatures who had suffered wrong,
But were still noble underneath the stroke.
They filled the darkness when the Dauber woke;
The men came peering to the rail to hear,
And the sea sighed, and the fog rose up sheer.

So the night past, but then no morning broke—
Only a something showed that night was dead.
A sea-bird, cackling like a devil, spoke,
And the fog drew away and hung like lead.
Like mighty cliffs it shaped, sullen and red;
Like glowering gods at watch it did appear,
And sometimes drew away, and then drew near.

Like islands, and like chasms, and like hell,
But always mighty and red, gloomy and ruddy,
Shutting the visible sea in like a well;
Slow heaving in vast ripples, blank and muddy,
Where the sun should have risen it streaked bloody.
The day was still-born; all the sea-fowl scattering
Splashed the still water, mewing, hovering, clattering.

Then Polar snow came down little and light,
Till all the sky was hidden by the small,
Most multitudinous drift of dirty white
Tumbling and wavering down and covering all;
Covering the sky, the sea, the clipper tall,

Furring the ropes with white, casing the mast,
Coming on no known air, but blowing past.

And all the air seemed full of gradual moan,
As though in those cloud-chasms the horns were blowing
The mort for gods cast out and overthrown,
Or for the eyeless sun plucked out and going.
Slow the low gradual moan came in the snowing;
The Dauber felt the prelude had begun.
The snowstorm fluttered by; he saw the sun

Show and pass by, gleam from one towering prison
Into another, vaster and more grim,
Which in dull crags of darkness had arisen
To muffle-to a final door on him.
The gods upon the dull crags lowered dim,
The pigeons chattered, quarrelling in the track.
In the southwest the dimness dulled to black.

Then came the cry of "Call all hands on deck!"
The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come:
Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck,
And crumples steel and smites the strong man dumb.

Down clattered flying kites and staysails: some
Sang out in quick, high calls; the fairleads skirled,
And from the south-west came the end of the world.

WE THEREFORE COMMIT OUR BROTHER

Night fell, and all night long the Dauber lay
Covered upon the table; all night long
The pitiless storm exulted at her prey,
Huddling the waters with her icy thong.
But to the covered shape she did no wrong.
He lay beneath the sailcloth. Bell by bell
The night wore through; the stars rose, the stars fell.

Blowing most pitiless cold out of clear sky
The wind roared all night long; and all night through
The green seas on the deck went washing by,
Flooding the half-deck; bitter hard it blew.
But little of it all the Dauber knew;
The sopping bunks, the floating chests, the wet,
The darkness, and the misery, and the sweat.

He was off duty. So it blew all night,
And when the watches changed the men would come

Dripping within the door to strike a light
And stare upon the Dauber lying dumb,
And say, "He come a cruel thump, poor chum."
Or, "He'd a-been a fine big man"; or, "He . . .
A smart young seaman he was getting to be."

Or, "Damn it all, it's what we've all to face! . . .
I knew another fellow one time . . ." then
Came a strange tale of death in a strange place
Out on the sea, in ships, with wandering men.
In many ways Death puts us in to pen.
The reefers came down tired and looked and slept.
Below the skylight little dribbles crept.

Along the painted woodwork, glistening, slow,
Following the roll and dripping, never fast,
But dripping on the quiet form below,
Like passing time talking to time long past.
And all night long "Ai, ai!" went the wind's blast,
And creaming water swished below the pale,
Unheeding body stretched beneath the sail.

At dawn they sewed him up, and at eight bells
They bore him to the gangway, wading deep,
Through the green-clutching, white-toothed water-hells
That flung his carriers over in their sweep.
They laid an old red ensign on the heap,
And all hands stood bareheaded, stooping, swaying,
Washed by the sea while the old man was praying

Out of a borrowed prayer-book. At a sign
They twitched the ensign back and tipped the grating.
A creamier bubbling broke the bubbling brine.
The muffled figure tilted to the weighting;
It dwindled slowly down, slowly gyrating.
Some craned to see; it dimmed, it disappeared;
The last green milky bubble blinked and cleared.

"Mister, shake out your reefs," the Captain called.
"Out topsail reefs!" the Mate cried; then all hands
Hurried, the great sails shook, and all hands hauled,

Singing that desolate song of lonely lands,
Of how a lover came in dripping bands,
Green with the wet and cold, to tell his lover
That Death was in the sea, and all was over.

Fair came the falling wind; a seaman said
The Dauber was a Jonah; once again
The clipper held her course, showing red lead,
Shattering the sea-tops into golden rain.
The waves bowed down before her like blown grain;
Onwards she thundered, on; her voyage was short,
Before the tier's bells rang her into port.

Cheerily they rang her in, those beating bells,
The new-come beauty stately from the sea,
Whitening the blue heave of the drowsy swells,
Treading the bubbles down. With three times three
They cheered her moving beauty in, and she
Came to her berth so noble, so superb;
Swayed like a queen, and answered to the curb.

Then in the sunset's flush they went aloft,
And unbent sails in that most lovely hour,
When the light gentles and the wind is soft,

And beauty in the heart breaks like a flower.
Working aloft they saw the mountain tower,
Snow to the peak; they heard the launchmen shout;
And bright along the bay the lights came out.

And then the night fell dark, and all night long
The pointed mountain pointed at the stars,
Frozen, alert, austere; the eagle's song
Screamed from her desolate screes and splintered scars.
On her intense crags where the air is sparse
The stars looked down; their many golden eyes
Watched her and burned, burned out, and came to rise.

Silent the finger of the summit stood,
Icy in pure, thin air, glittering with snows.
Then the sun's coming turned the peak to blood,
And in the rest-house the muleteers arose.
And all day long, where only the eagle goes,
Stones, loosened by the sun, fall; the stones falling
Fill empty gorge on gorge with echoes calling.

Selections from

THE DAFFODIL FIELDS

I

Between the barren pasture and the wood
There is a patch of poultry-stricken grass,
Where, in old time, Ryemeadows' Farmhouse stood,
And human fate brought tragic things to pass.
A spring comes bubbling up there, cold as glass,
It bubbles down, crusting the leaves with lime,
Babbling the selfsame song that it has sung through time.

Ducks gobble at the selvage of the brook,
But still it slips away, the cold hill-spring,
Past the Ryemeadows' lonely woodland nook
Where many a stubble grey-goose preens her wing,
On, by the woodland side. You hear it sing
Past the lone copse where poachers set their wires,
Past the green hill once grim with sacrificial fires.

Another water joins it; then it turns,
Runs through the Ponton Wood, still turning west,

Past foxgloves, Canterbury bells, and ferns,
And many a blackbird's, many a thrush's nest;
The cattle tread it there; then, with a zest
It sparkles out, babbling its pretty chatter
Through Foxholes Farm, where it gives white-faced cattle water.

Under the road it runs, and now it slips
Past the great ploughland, babbling, drop and linn,
To the moss'd stumps of elm trees which it lips,
And blackberry-bramble-trails where eddies spin.
Then, on its left, some short-grassed fields begin,
Red-clayed and pleasant, which the young spring fills
With the never-quiet joy of dancing daffodils.

There are three fields where daffodils are found;
The grass is dotted blue-grey with their leaves;
Their nodding beauty shakes along the ground
Up to a fir-clump shutting out the eaves
Of an old farm where always the wind grieves

High in the fir boughs, moaning; people call
This farm The Roughs, but some call it the
Poor Maid's Hall.

There, when the first green shoots of tender
corn
Show on the plough; when the first drift of
white
Stars the black branches of the spiky thorn,
And afternoons are warm and evenings light,
The shivering daffodils do take delight,
Shaking beside the brook, and grass comes
green,
And blue dog-violets come and glistening
celandine.

And there the pickers come, picking for town
Those dancing daffodils; all day they pick;
Hard-featured women, weather-beaten brown,
Or swarthy-red, the colour of old brick.
At noon they break their meats under the
rick.
The smoke of all three farms lifts blue in air
As though man's passionate mind had never
suffered there.

And sometimes as they rest an old man
comes,
Shepherd or carter, to the hedgerow-side,
And looks upon their gangrel tribe, and
hums,

And thinks all gone to wreck since master
died;
And sighs over a passionate harvest-tide
Which Death's red sickle reaped under those
hills,
There, in the quiet fields among the daffodils.

THE RIVER

The steaming river loitered like old blood
On which the tugboat bearing Michael beat,
Past whitened horse bones sticking in the
mud.
The reed stems looked like metal in the heat.
Then the banks fell away, and there were
neat,
Red herds of sullen cattle drifting slow.
A fish leaped, making rings, making the dead
blood flow.

Wormed hard-wood piles were driv'n in the
river bank,
The steamer threshed alongside with sick
screws
Churning the mud below her till it stank;
Big gassy butcher-bubbles burst on the ooze.
There Michael went ashore; as glad to lose
One not a native there, the Gauchos flung
His broken gear ashore, one waved, a bell was
rung.

The bowfast was cast off, the screw revolved,
Making a bloodier bubbling; rattling rope
Fell to the hatch, the engine's tune resolved
Into its steadier beat of rise and slope;
The steamer went her way; and Michael's hope
Died as she lessened; he was there alone.
The lowing of the cattle made a gradual moan.

He thought of Mary, but the thought was dim;
That was another life, lived long before.
His mind was in new worlds which altered him.
The startling present left no room for more.
The sullen river lipped, the sky, the shore
Were vaster than of old, and lonely, lonely.
Sky and low hills of grass and moaning cattle only.

THE RETURN

Soon he was at the Foxholes, at the place
Whither, from over sea, his heart had turned
Often at evening-ends in times of grace.
But little outward change his eye discerned;
A red rose at her bedroom window burned,
Just as before. Even as of old the wasps
Poised at the yellow plums; the gate creaked on its hasps

And the white fantails sidled on the roof
Just as before; their pink feet, even as of old,
Printed the frosty morning's rime with proof.
Still the zew-tallat's thatch was green with mould;
The apples on the withered boughs were gold.
Men and the times were changed: "And I," said he,
"Will go and not return, since she is not for me.

"I'll go, for it would be a scurvy thing
To spoil her marriage, and besides, she cares
For that half-priest she married with the ring.
Small joy for me in seeing how she wears,
Or seeing what he takes and what she shares.
That beauty and those ways: she had such ways,
There in the daffodils in those old April days.

So with an impulse of good will he turned,
Leaving that place of daffodils; the road
Was paven sharp with memories which burned;
He trod them strongly under as he strode.
At the Green Turning's forge the furnace glowed;

Red dithying sparks flew from the crumpled soft
Fold from the fire's heart; down clanged the hammers oft.

That was a bitter place to pass, for there
Mary and he had often, often stayed
To watch the horseshoe growing in the glare.
It was a tryst in childhood when they strayed.
There was a stile beside the forge; he laid
His elbows on it, leaning, looking down.
The river-valley stretched with great trees turning brown.

Infinite, too, because it reached the sky,
And distant spires arose and distant smoke;
The whiteness on the blue went stilly by;
Only the clinking forge the stillness broke.
Ryemeadows brook was there; The Roughs, the oak
Where the White Woman walked; the black firs showed
Around the Occleve homestead, Mary's new abode.

A long, long time he gazed at that fair place,
So well remembered from of old; he sighed.
"I will go down and look upon her face,
See her again, whatever may betide.
Hell is my future; I shall soon have died,

But I will take to hell one memory more;
She shall not see nor know; I shall be gone
before;

"Before they turn the dogs upon me, even.
I do not mean to speak; but only see.
Even the devil gets a peep at heaven;
One peep at her shall come to hell with me;
One peep at her, no matter what may be."
He crossed the stile and hurried down the
slope.
Remembered trees and hedges gave a zest to
hope.

* * * *

A low brick wall with privet shrubs beyond
Ringed in The Roughs upon the side he
neared;
Eastward some bramble bushes cloaked the
pond;
Westward was barley-stubble not yet cleared.
He thrust aside the privet boughs and peered.
The drooping fir trees let their darkness trail
Black like a pirate's masts bound under easy
sail.

The garden with its autumn flowers was
there;
Few that his wayward memory linked with
her.
Summer had burnt the summer flowers bare,

But honey-hunting bees still made a stir.
Sprigs were still bluish on the lavender,
And bluish daisies budded, bright flies poised;
The wren upon the tree-stump carolled cheery-voiced.

He could not see her there. Windows were wide,
Late wasps were cruising, and the curtains shook.
Smoke, like the house's breathing, floated, sighed;
Among the trembling firs strange ways it took.
But still no Mary's presence blessed his look;
The house was still as if deserted, hushed.
Faint fragrance hung about it as if herbs were crushed.

Fragrance that gave his memory's guard a hint
Of times long past, of reapers in the corn,
Bruising with heavy boots the stalks of mint,
When first the berry reddens on the thorn.
Memories of her that fragrance brought. Forlorn
That vigil of the watching outcast grew;
He crept towards the kitchen, sheltered by a yew.

The windows of the kitchen opened wide.
Again the fragrance came; a woman spoke;
Old Mrs. Occleve talked to one inside.
A smell of cooking filled a gust of smoke.
Then fragrance once again, for herbs were broke;
Pourri was being made; the listener heard
Things lifted and laid down, bruised into sweetness, stirred.

While an old woman made remarks to one
Who was not the beloved: Michael learned
That Roger's wife at Upton had a son,
And that the red geraniums should be turned;
A hen was missing, and a rick was burned;
Our Lord commanded patience; here it broke;
The window closed, it made the kitchen chimney smoke.

Steps clacked on flagstones to the outer door;
A dairymaid, whom he remembered well,
Lined, now, with age, and greyer than before,
Rang a cracked cow-bell for the dinner-bell.
He saw the dining-room; he could not tell
If Mary were within: inly he knew
That she was coming now, that she would be in blue.

Blue with a silver locket at the throat,
And that she would be there, within there, near,
With the little blushes that he knew by rote,
And the grey eyes so steadfast and so dear,
The voice, pure like the nature, true and clear,
Speaking to her belov'd within the room.
The gate clicked, Lion came: the outcast hugged the gloom,

Watching intently from below the boughs,
While Lion cleared his riding-boots of clay,
Eyed the high clouds and went within the house.
His eyes looked troubled, and his hair looked grey.
Dinner began within with much to say.
Old Occleve roared aloud at his own joke.
Mary, it seemed, was gone; the loved voice never spoke.

Nor could her lover see her from the yew;
She was not there at table; she was ill,
Ill, or away perhaps—he wished he knew.
Away, perhaps, for Occleve bellowed still.
"If sick," he thought, "the maid or Lion will
Take food to her." He watched; the dinner ended.
The staircase was not used; none climbed it, none descended.

"Not here," he thought; but wishing to be sure,
He waited till the Occleves went to field,
Then followed, round the house, another lure,
Using the well-known privet as his shield.
He meant to run a risk; his heart was steeled.
He knew of old which bedroom would be hers;
He crouched upon the north front in among the firs.

The house stared at him with its red-brick blank,
Its vacant window-eyes; its open door,
With old wrought bridle ring-hooks at each flank,
Swayed on a creaking hinge as the wind bore.
Nothing had changed; the house was as before,
The dull red brick, the windows sealed or wide:
"I will go in," he said. He rose and stepped inside.

None could have seen him coming; all was still;
He listened in the doorway for a sign.
Above, a rafter creaked, a stir, a thrill
Moved, till the frames clacked on the picture line.

"Old Mother Occleve sleeps, the servants dine,"
He muttered, listening. "Hush." A silence brooded.
Far off the kitchen dinner clattered; he intruded.

Still, to his right, the best room door was locked.
Another door was at his left; he stayed.
Within, a stately timepiece ticked and tocked
To one who slumbered breathing deep; it made
An image of Time's going and man's trade.
He looked: Old Mother Occleve lay asleep,
Hands crossed upon her knitting, rosy, breathing deep.

He tiptoed up the stairs which creaked and cracked.
The landing creaked; the shut doors, painted gray,
Loomed, as if shutting in some dreadful act.
The nodding frames seemed ready to betray.
The east room had been closed in Michael's day,
Being the best; but now he guessed it hers;
The fields of daffodils lay next it, past the firs.

Just as he reached the landing, Lion cried,
Somewhere below, "I'll get it." Lion's feet
Struck on the flagstones with a hasty stride,
"He's coming up," thought Michael, "we shall meet,"
He snatched the nearest door for his retreat,
Opened with thieves' swift silence, dared not close,
But stood within, behind it. Lion's footsteps rose,

Running two steps at once, while Michael stood,
Not breathing, only knowing that the room
Was someone's bedroom smelling of old wood,
Hung with engravings of the day of doom.
The footsteps stopped; and Lion called, to whom?
A gentle question, tapping at a door,
And Michael shifted feet, and creakings took the floor.

The footsteps recommenced, a door-catch clacked;
Within an eastern room the footsteps passed.
Drawers were pulled loudly open and ransacked,
Chattels were thrust aside and overcast.

What could the thing be that he sought? At last
His voice said, "Here it is." The wormèd floor
Creaked with returning footsteps down the corridor.

The footsteps came as though the walker read,
Or added rows of figures by the way;
There was much hesitation in the tread;
Lion seemed pondering which, to go or stay;
Then, seeing the door, which covered Michael, sway,
He swiftly crossed and shut it. "Always one
For order," Michael muttered; "Now be swift, my son."

The action seemed to break the walker's mood;
The footsteps passed downstairs, along the hall,
Out at the door and off towards the wood.
"Gone," Michael muttered. "Now to hazard all."
Outside, the frames still nodded on the wall.
Michael stepped swiftly up the floor to try
The door where Lion tapped and waited for reply.

It was the eastmost of the rooms which look
Over the fields of daffodils; the bound
Scanned from its windows is Ryemeadows
brook,
Banked by gnarled apple trees and rising
ground.
Most gently Michael tapped; he heard no
sound,
Only the blind-pull tapping with the wind;
The kitchen-door was opened; kitchen-clatter
dinned.

A woman walked along the hall below,
Humming; a maid, he judged; the footsteps
died,
Listening intently still, he heard them go,
Then swiftly turned the knob and went in-
side.
The blind-pull at the window volleyed wide;
The curtains streamed out like a waterfall;
The pictures of the fox-hunt clacked along
the wall.

No one was there; no one; the room was hers.
A book of praise lay open on the bed;
The clothes-press smelt of many lavenders,
Her spirit stamped the room; herself was
fled.
Here she found peace of soul like daily bread,

Here, with her lover Lion; Michael gazed;
He would have been the sharer had he not
been crazed.

He took the love-gift handkerchief again;
He laid it on her table, near the glass,
So opened that the embroidered name was
plain;
"Plain," he exclaimed, "she cannot let it pass.
It stands and speaks for me as bold as brass.
My answer, my heart's cry, to tell her this,
That she is still my darling; all she was
she is.

"So she will know at least that she was wrong,
That underneath the blindness I was true.
Fate is the strongest thing, though men are
strong;
Out from beyond life I was sealed to you.
But my blind ways destroyed the cords that
drew;
And now, the evil done, I know my need;
Fate has his way with those who mar what
is decreed.

"And now, good-bye." He closed the door
behind him,
Then stept, with firm swift footstep down the
stair,
Meaning to go where she would never find
him;

He would go down through darkness to
despair.
Out at the door he stept; the autumn air
Came fresh upon his face; none saw him go.
"Good-bye, my love," he muttered; "it is
better so."

Soon he was on the high road, out of sight
Of valley and farm; soon he could see no
more
The oast-house pointing finger take the light
As tumbling pigeons glittered over; nor
Could he behold the wind-vane gilded o'er,
Swinging above the church; the road swung
round.
"Now, the last look," he cried: he saw that
holy ground.

"Good-bye," he cried; he could behold it all,
Spread out as in a picture; but so clear
That the gold apple stood out from the wall;
Like a red jewel stood the grazing steer.
Precise, intensely coloured, all brought near,
As in a vision, lay that holy ground.
"Mary is there," he moaned, "and I am out-
ward bound.

"I never saw this place so beautiful,
Never like this. I never saw it glow.
Spirit is on this place; it fills it full.

So let the die be cast; I will not go.
But I will see her face to face and know
From her own lips what thoughts she has
of me;
And if disaster come: right; let disaster be."

Back, by another way, he turned. The sun
Fired the yew-tops in the Roman woods.
Lights in the valley twinkled one by one,
The starlings whirled in dropping multi-
tudes.
Dusk fingered into one earth's many moods,
Back to The Roughs he walked; he neared
the brook;
A lamp burned in the farm; he saw; his
fingers shook.

He had to cross the brook, to cross a field
Where daffodils were thick when years were
young.
Then, were she there, his fortunes should be
sealed.
Down the mud trackway to the brook he
swung;
Then while the passion trembled on his
tongue,
Dim, by the dim bridge-stile, he seemed to
see
A figure standing mute; a woman—it was she.

She stood quite stilly, waiting for him there.
She did not seem surprised; the meeting seemed
Planned from all time by powers in the air
To change their human fates; he even deemed
That in another life this thing had gleamed,
This meeting by the bridge. He said, "It's you."
"Yes, I," she said, "who else? You must have known; you knew

"That I should come here to the brook to see,
After your message." "You were out," he said.
"Gone, and I did not know where you could be.
Where were you, Mary, when the thing was laid?"
"Old Mrs. Cale is dying, and I stayed
Longer than usual, while I read the Word.
You could have hardly gone." She paused, her bosom stirred.

"Mary, I sinned," he said. "Not that, dear, no,"
She said; "but, oh, you were unkind, unkind,
Never to write a word and leave me so,
But out of sight with you is out of mind."
"Mary, I sinned," he said, "and I was blind.

Oh, my beloved, are you Lion's wife?"
"Belov'd sounds strange," she answered, "in
my present life.

"But it is sweet to hear it, all the same.
It is a language little heard by me
Alone, in that man's keeping, with my shame.
I never thought such miseries could be.
I was so happy in you, Michael. He
Came when I felt you changed from what I
thought you.
Even now it is not love, but jealousy that
brought you."

"That is untrue," he said. "I am in hell.
You are my heart's beloved, Mary, you.
By God, I know your beauty now too well.
We are each other's, flesh and soul, we two."
"That was sweet knowledge once," she said;
"we knew
That truth of old. Now, in a strange man's
bed,
I read it in my soul, and find it written red."

"Is he a brute?" he asked. "No," she replied.
"I did not understand what it would mean.
And now that you are back, would I had died;
Died, and the misery of it not have been.
Lion would not be wrecked, nor I unclean.

I was a proud one once, and now I'm tame;
Oh, Michael, say some word to take away my shame."

She sobbed; his arms went round her; the night heard
Intense fierce whispering passing, soul to soul,
Love running hot on many a murmured word,
Love's passionate giving into new control.
Their present misery did but blow the coal,
Did but entangle deeper their two wills,
While the brown brook ran on by buried daffodils.

THE END OF THE TROUBLE

Lion lay still while the cold tides of death
Came brimming up his channels. With one hand
He groped to know if Michael still drew breath.
His little hour was running out its sand.
Then, in a mist, he saw his Mary stand
Above. He cried aloud, "He was my brother.
I was his comrade sworn, and we have killed each other.

"Oh desolate grief, beloved, and through me.
We wise who try to change. Oh, you wild birds,

Help my unhappy spirit to the sea.
The golden bowl is scattered into shreds."
And Mary knelt and murmured passionate
words
To that poor body on the dabbled flowers:
"Oh, beauty, oh, sweet soul. oh, little love
of ours—

"Michael, my own heart's darling, speak; it's
me,
Mary. You know my voice. I'm here, dear,
here.
Oh, little golden-haired one, listen. See,
It's Mary, Michael. Speak to Mary, dear.
Oh, Michael, little love, he cannot hear;
And you have killed him, Lion; he is dead.
My little friend, my love, my Michael, golden
head.

"We had such fun together, such sweet fun,
My love and I, my merry love and I.
Oh, love, you shone upon me like the sun.
Oh, Michael, say some little last good-bye."
Then in a calm voice Lion called, "I die.
Go home and tell my people. Mary. Hear.
Though I have wrought this ruin, I have
loved you, dear.

"Better than he; not better, dear, as well.
If you could kiss me, dearest, at this last.

We have made bloody doorways from our hell,
Cutting our tangle. Now, the murder past,
We are but pitiful poor souls; and fast
The darkness and the cold come. Kiss me, sweet;
I loved you all my life; but some lives never meet

"Though they go wandering side by side through Time.
Kiss me," he cried. She bent, she kissed his brow.
"Oh, friend," she said, "you're lying in the slime."
"Three blind ones, dear," he murmured, "in the slough,
Caught fast for death; but never mind that now;
Go home and tell my people. I am dying,
Dying dear, dying now." He died; she left him lying,

And kissed her dead one's head and crossed the field.
"They have been killed," she called, in a great crying.
"Killed, and our spirits' eyes are all unsealed,
The blood is scattered on the flowers drying."

It was the hush of dusk, and owls were flying;
They hooted as the Occleves ran to bring
That sorry harvest home from Death's red harvesting.

They laid the bodies on the bed together.
And "You were beautiful," she said, "and you
Were my own darling in the April weather.
You knew my very soul, you knew, you knew.
Oh, my sweet, piteous love, I was not true.
Fetch me fair water and the flowers of spring;
My love is dead, and I must deck his burying."

They left her with her dead; they could not choose
But grant the spirit burning in her face
Rights that their pity urged them to refuse.
They did her sorrow and the dead a grace.
All night they heard her passing footsteps trace
About the flooring in the room of death.
They heard her singing there, lowly, with gentle breath,

Yet when the darkness passed they tried the door,
And burst it, fearing; there the singer lay

Drooped at her lover's bedside on the floor,
Singing her passionate last of life away.
White flowers had fallen from a blackthorn spray
Over her loosened hair. Pale flowers of spring
Filled the white room of death; they covered everything.

Primroses, daffodils, and cuckoo-flowers.
She bowed her singing head on Michael's breast.
"Oh, it was sweet," she cried, "that love of ours.
You were the dearest, sweet; I loved you best.
Beloved, my beloved, let me rest
By you forever, little Michael mine.
Now the great hour is stricken, and the bread and wine

"Broken and spilt; and now the homing birds
Draw to a covert, Michael; I to you.
Bury us two together," came her words.
The dropping petals fell about the two.
Her heart had broken; she was dead. They drew
Her gentle head aside; they found it pressed
Against the broidered 'kerchief spread on Michael's breast,

The one that bore her name in Michael's hair,
Given so long before. They let her lie
While the dim moon died out upon the air,
And happy sunlight coloured all the sky.
The lack cock crowed for morning; carts
went by;
Smoke rose from cottage chimneys; from the
byre
The yokes went clanking by, to dairy,
through the mire.

In the day's noise the water's noise was
stilled,
But still it slipped along, the cold hill-spring,
Dropping from leafy hollows, which it filled,
On to the pebbly shelves which made it sing;
Glints glittered on it from the 'fisher's wing;
It saw the moorhen nesting; then it stayed
In a great space of reeds where merry otters
played.

Slowly it loitered past the shivering reeds
Into a mightier water; thence its course
Becomes a pasture where the salmon feeds,
Wherein no bubble tells its humble source;
But the great waves go rolling, and the horse
Snorts at the bursting waves and will not
drink,
And the great ships go outward, bubbling to
the brink,

Outward, with men upon them, stretched in line,
Handling the halliards to the ocean's gates,
Where flicking windflaws fill the air with brine,
And all the ocean opens. Then the mates
Cry, and the sunburnt crew no longer waits,
But sings triumphant and the topsail fills
To this old tale of woe among the daffodils.

Selections from

PHILIP THE KING

MESSENGER.

This gold chain . . .
Bears the twelve badges of the strength of Spain
Once linked in glory, Philip, but now loosed.
(*Detaching link from link.*)
Castilla, Leon, Aragon, and these,
Palestine, Portugal, the Sicilies,
Navarre, Granada, the Valencian State,
The Indies, East and West, the Archducate,
The Western Mainland in the Ocean Sea.
Those who upheld their strength have ceased to be.
I, who am dying, King, have seen their graves.
Philip, your Navy is beneath the waves.

PHILIP.

He who in bounty gives in wisdom takes.

MESSENGER.

O King, forgive me for my spirit breaks;
I saw those beaches where the Grange descends
White with unburied corpses of stripped friends.

PHILIP.

I grieve that Spain's disaster brings such loss.

MESSENGER.

From Pentland to the Groyne the tempests toss
Unshriven Spaniards driving with the tide.
They were my lovely friends and they have died,
Far from wind-broken Biscay, far from home,
With no anointing chrism but the foam.

PHILIP.

The dead will rise from unsuspected slime;
God's chosen will be gathered in God's time.

MESSENGER.

King, they died helpless; our unwieldy fleet
Made such a target to the English guns
That we were riddled through like sifted wheat.

We never came to grappling with them once.
They raked us from a distance, and then ran.
Each village throughout Spain has lost a man;
The widows in the seaports fill the streets.

PHILIP.

Uncertain chance decides the fate of fleets.

MESSENGER.

Now the North Sea is haunted for all time
By miserable souls whose dying words
Cursed the too proud adventure as a crime.
Our broken galleons house the gannet-birds.
The Irish burn our Captain's bones for lime.
O misery that the might of England wrought!

PHILIP.

Christ is the only remedy for thought
When the mind sickens. We are pieces played,
Not moving as we will, but as we are made;
Beaten and spurred at times like stubborn steeds,
That we may go God's way. Your spirit bleeds,
Having been proved in trouble past her strength.
Give me the roll in all its ghastly length.
Which of my friends survive, if any live?

MESSENGER.

Some have survived, but all are fugitive.
Your Admiral in command is living still;
Michael Oquendo too, thought he is ill,
Dying of broken heart and bitter shame.
Valdes is prisoner, Manrique the same.

PHILIP.

God willed the matter; they are not to blame.
Thank God that they are living. Name the rest.

MESSENGER.

They are all dead . . . with him you loved the best.

PHILIP.

I dreamed De Leyva died, so it is true?

MESSENGER.

Drowned on the Irish coast with all his crew.
After enduring dying many days
The sea has given him quiet. Many ways
Lead men to death, and he a hard one trod,
Bearing much misery, like a knight of God.

PHILIP.

Amen. Go on.

MESSENGER.

Hugh de Moncada died,
Shot in his burning ship by Calais side,

Cheering his men to save her. Pimentel
Sank in a galleon shambled like a hell
Rather than yield, and in a whirl of flames
Pedro Mendoza, Captain of St. James,
Stood with Don Philip thrusting boarders back
Till their Toledan armour was burnt black,
And both their helms ran blood. And there they fell,
Shot down to bleed to death. They perished well,
Happy to die in battle for their King
Before defeat had fallen on their friends;
Happier than most, for where the merrows sing
Paredes and his brother met their ends,
And Don Alarcon, cast alive ashore,
Was killed and stripped and hanged upon a tree.
And young Mendoza, whom the flagship bore,
Died of starvation and of misery.
But hundreds perished, King; why mention these?
Battle and hunger, heart-break, and the seas
Have overwhelmed the chivalry of Spain.

PHILIP.

Misfortune, after effort, brings no stain.
Perhaps I underjudged the English fleet.

How was it that the Spaniards met defeat?
What evil fortune brought about our fall?

MESSENGER.

Their sailors and their cannon did it all.

PHILIP.

Yet when the fleet reached Calais all went well.

MESSENGER.

Our woes began there.

PHILIP.

Tell me what befell.

MESSENGER.

We were to ship the troops in Calais Road;
They lay encamped, prepared to go aboard.
To windward still the English fleet abode—
Still as in port when peace has been restored.

The wind and sea were fair,
We lay at anchor there;
The stars burned in the air,
The men were sleeping,
When in the midnight dark
Our watchman saw a spark
Suddenly light a bark
With long flames leaping.

Then, as they stood amazed,
Others and other blazed;
Then terror set them crazed,
They ran down screaming:
"Fire-ships are coming! Wake!
Cast loose, for Jesus' sake!
Eight fire-ships come from Drake—
Look at their gleaming!"

Roused in the dark from bed,
We saw the fire show red,
And instant panic spread
Through troops and sailors;
They swarmed on deck unclad,
They did what terror bade,
King, they were like the mad
Escaped from jailers.

Some prayed for mercy, some
Rang bells or beat the drum,
As though despair had come
At hell's contriving;
Captains with terror pale
Screamed through the dark their hail,
"Cut cable, loose the sail,
And set all driving!"

Heading all ways at once,
Grinding each other's guns,
Our blundering galleons

Athwart-hawse galleys,
Timbers and plankings cleft,
And half our tackling reft,
Your grand Armada left
The roads of Calais.

Weary and overwrought
We strove to make all taut;
But when the morning brought
The dawn to light us,
Drake, with the weather gage,
Made signal to engage,
And, like a pard in rage,
Bore down to fight us.

Nobly the English line
Trampled the bubbled brine,
We heard the gun-trucks whine
To the taut laniard.
Onwards we saw them forge,
White-billowing at the gorge.
"On, on!" they cried, "St. George!
Down with the Spaniard!"

From their van squadron broke
A withering battle-stroke,
Tearing our planked oak
By straiks asunder,
Blasting the wood like rot
With such a hail of shot,

So constant and so hot
It beat us under.

The English would not close;
They fought us as they chose,
Dealing us deadly blows
For seven hours.
Lords of our chiefest rank
The bitter billow drank,
For there the English sank
Three ships of ours.

* * * *

Then the wind forced us northward from the fight;
We could not ship the army nor return;
We held the sea in trouble through the night,
Watching the English signals blink and burn.
The English in a dim cloud kept astern;
All night they signalled, while our shattered ships
Huddled like beasts beneath the drovers' whips.

* * * *

At dawn the same wind held; we could not strive.
The English drove us north as herdsmen drive.

* * * *

Under our tattered flags,
With rigging cut to rags,
Our ships like stricken stags
Were heaped and hounded.
Caught by the unknown tide,
With neither chart nor guide,
We fouled the Holland side,
Where four more grounded.

Our water-casks were burst,
The horses died of thirst,
The wounded raved and curst,
Uncared, untended.
All night we heard the crying
Of lonely shipmates dying;
We had to leave them lying.
So the fight ended.

PHILIP.

God gives His victory as He wills. But this
Was not complete destruction. What thing worse
Came to destroy you?

MESSENGER.

An avenging curse,
Due for old sins, destroyed us.

PHILIP.

Tell the tale.

MESSENGER.

O King, when morning dawned it blew a gale,
But still the English followed, and we fled
Till breakers made the dirty waters pale.
We saw the Zeeland sandbanks right ahead,
Blind in a whirling spray that gave us dread;
For we were blown there, and the water shoaled.
The crying of the leadsmen at the lead,
Calling the soundings, were our death-bells tolled.

We drifted down to death upon the sands;
The English drew away to watch us drown;
We saw the bitter breakers with grey hands
Tear the dead body of the sandbank brown:
We could do nothing, so we drifted down
Singing the psalms for death; we who had been
Lords of the sea and knights of great renown,
Doomed to be strangled by a death unclean.

PHILIP.

So there the ships were wrecked?

MESSENGER.

Time had not struck.
O King, we learned how blessed mercy saves:
Even as our forefoot grounded on the muck,

Tripping us up to drown us in the waves,
A sudden windshift snatched us from our graves
And drove us north; and now another woe,
Tempest unending, beat our ships to staves—
A never-dying gale with frost and snow.

Now our hearts failed, for food and water failed;
The men fell sick by troops, the wounded died.
They washed about the wet decks as we sailed
For want of strength to lift them overside.
Desolate seas we sailed, so grim, so wide,
That ship by ship our comrades disappeared.
With neither sun nor star to be a guide,
Like spirits of the wretched dead we steered.

Till, having beaten through the Pentland Pass,
We saw the Irish surf, with mists of spray
Blowing far inland, blasting trees and grass,
And gave God thanks, for we espied a bay
Safe, with bright water running down the clay—
A running brook where we could drink and drink.
But drawing near, our ships were cast away,
Bilged on the rocks; we saw our comrades sink . . .

Or worse: for those the breakers cast ashore
The Irish killed and stripped; their bodies white
Lay naked to the wolves—yea, sixty score—
All down the windy beach, a piteous sight.
The savage Irish watched by bonfire light
Lest more should come ashore; we heard them there
Screaming the bloody news of their delight.
Then we abandoned hope and new despair.

And now the fleet is sunken in the sea,
And all the seamen, all the might of Spain,
Are dead, O King, and out of misery,
Never to drag at frozen ropes again.
Never to know defeat, nor feel the pain
Of watching dear companions sink and die.
Death's everlasting armistice to the brain
Gives their poor griefs quietus; let them lie.

I, like a ghost returning from the grave,
Come from a stricken ship to tell the news
Of Spanish honour which we could not save,
Nor win again, nor even die to lose;
And since God's hidden wisdom loves to bruise
Those whom He loves, we, trembling in despair,

Will watch our griefs to see God's finger
there,
And make His will our solace and excuse.
Defeat is bitter and the truth is hard—
Spain is defeated, England has prevailed;
This is the banner which I could not guard,
And this the consecrated sword which failed.
Do with your dying Captain as you will.
(*He lays down sword and banner.*)

PHILIP.

I, from my heart, thank God, from whose
great hand
I am so helped with power, I can still
Set out another fleet against that land.
Nor do I think it ill
If all the running water takes its course
While there are unspent fountains at the
source.
He sendeth out His word and melteth them.
Take back your standard, Captain. As you go,
Bid the bells toll and let the clergy come.
Then in the city by the strike of drum
Proclaim a general fast. In bitter days
The soul finds God, God us.
(*Exit* CAPTAIN.)

PHILIP (*Alone*).

De Leyva, friend,
Whom I shall never see, never again,

This misery that I feel is over Spain.
O God, beloved God, in pity send
That blessed rose among the thorns, an end:
Give a bruised spirit peace.

(*He kneels. A muffled march of the drums.*)

CURTAIN.

TRUTH

Man with his burning soul
Has but an hour of breath
To build a ship of truth
In which his soul may sail.
Sail on the sea of death,
For death takes toll
Of beauty, courage, youth,
Of all but truth.

Life's city ways are dark,
Men mutter by; the wells
Of the great waters moan.
O death! O sea! O tide!
The waters moan like bells;
No light, no mark,
The soul goes out alone
On seas unknown.

Stripped of all purple robes,
Stripped of all golden lies,

I will not be afraid,
Truth will preserve through death.
Perhaps the stars will rise,
The stars like globes;
The ship my striving made
May see night fade.

THE "WANDERER"

All day they loitered by the resting ships,
Telling their beauties over, taking stock;
At night the verdict left my messmates' lips,
"The *Wanderer* is the finest ship in dock."

I had not seen her, but a friend, since drowned,
Drew her, with painted ports, low, lovely, lean,
Saying, "The *Wanderer,* clipper, outward bound,
The loveliest ship my eyes have ever seen—

"Perhaps to-morrow you will see her sail.
She sails at sunrise": but the morrow showed
No *Wanderer* setting forth for me to hail;
Far down the stream men pointed where she rode,

Rode the great trackway to the sea, dim, dim,
Already gone before the stars were gone.

I saw her at the sea-line's smoky rim
Grow swiftly vaguer as they towed her on.

Soon even her masts were hidden in the haze
Beyond the city; she was on her course
To trample billows for a hundred days;
That afternoon the norther gathered force,

Blowing a small snow from a point of east.
"Oh, fair for her," we said, "to take her south."
And in our spirits, as the wind increased,
We saw her there, beyond the river mouth,

Setting her side-lights in the wildering dark,
To glint upon mad water, while the gale
Roared like a battle, snapping like a shark,
And drunken seamen struggled with the sail.

While with sick hearts her mates put out of mind
Their little children left astern, ashore,
And the gale's gathering made the darkness blind,
Water and air one intermingled roar.

Then we forgot her, for the fiddlers played,
Dancing and singing held our merry crew;
The old ship moaned a little as she swayed.
It blew all night, oh, bitter hard it blew!

So that at midnight I was called on deck
To keep an anchor-watch: I heard the sea
Roar past in white procession filled with wreck;
Intense bright frosty stars burned over me,

And the Greek brig beside us dipped and dipped,
White to the muzzle like a half-tide rock,
Drowned to the mainmast with the seas she shipped;
Her cable-swivels clanged at every shock.

And like a never-dying force, the wind
Roared till we shouted with it, roared until
Its vast vitality of wrath was thinned,
Had beat its fury breathless and was still.

By dawn the gale had dwindled into flaw,
A glorious morning followed: with my friend
I climbed the fo'c's'le-head to see; we saw
The waters hurrying shorewards without end.

Haze blotted out the river's lowest reach;
Out of the gloom the steamers, passing by,
Called with their sirens, hooting their sea-speech;
Out of the dimness others made reply.

And as we watched, there came a rush of feet
Charging the fo'c's'le till the hatchway shook.

Men all about us thrust their way, or beat,
Crying, "The *Wanderer!* Down the river!
Look!"

I looked with them towards the dimness; there
Gleamed like a spirit striding out of night,
A full-rigged ship unutterably fair,
Her masts like trees in winter, frosty-bright.

Foam trembled at her bows like wisps of wool;
She trembled as she towed. I had not dreamed
That work of man could be so beautiful,
In its own presence and in what it seemed.

"So, she is putting back again," I said.
"How white with frost her yards are on the fore."
One of the men about me answer made,
"That is not frost, but all her sails are tore,

"Torn into tatters, youngster, in the gale;
Her best foul-weather suit gone." It was true,
Her masts were white with rags of tattered sail
Many as gannets when the fish are due.

Beauty in desolation was her pride,
Her crowned array a glory that had been;

She faltered tow'rds us like a swan that died,
But although ruined she was still a queen.

"Put back with all her sails gone," went the
word;
Then, from her signals flying, rumor ran,
"The sea that stove her boats in killed her
third;
She has been gutted and has lost a man."

So, as though stepping to a funeral march,
She passed defeated homewards whence she
came,
Ragged with tattered canvas white as starch,
A wild bird that misfortune had made tame.

She was refitted soon: another took
The dead man's office; then the singers hove
Her capstan till the snapping hawsers shook;
Out, with a bubble at her bows, she drove.

Again they towed her seawards, and again
We, watching, praised her beauty, praised her
trim,
Saw her fair house-flag flutter at the main,
And slowly saunter seawards, dwindling dim;

And wished her well, and wondered, as she
died,
How, when her canvas had been sheeted home,

Her quivering length would sweep into her
stride,
Making the greenness milky with her foam.

But when we rose next morning, we discerned
Her beauty once again a shattered thing;
Towing to dock the *Wanderer* returned,
A wounded sea-bird with a broken wing.

A spar was gone, her rigging's disarray
Told of a worse disaster than the last;
Like draggled hair dishevelled hung the stay,
Drooping and beating on the broken mast.

Half-mast upon her flagstaff hung her flag;
Word went among us how the broken spar
Had gored her captain like an angry stag,
And killed her mate a half-day from the bar.

She passed to dock upon the top of flood.
An old man near me shook his head and
swore:
"Like a bad woman, she has tasted blood—
There'll be no trusting in her any more."

We thought it truth, and when we saw her
there
Lying in dock, beyond, across the stream,
We would forget that we had called her fair,
We thought her murderess and the past a
dream.

And when she sailed again, we watched in awe,
Wondering what bloody act her beauty planned,
What evil lurked behind the thing we saw,
What strength was there that thus annulled man's hand,

How next its triumph would compel man's will
Into compliance with external Fate,
How next the powers would use her to work ill
On suffering men; we had not long to wait.

For soon the outcry of derision rose,
"Here comes the *Wanderer!*" the expected cry.
Guessing the cause, our mocking joined with those
Yelled from the shipping as they towed her by.

She passed us close, her seamen paid no heed
To what was called: they stood, a sullen group,
Smoking and spitting, careless of her need,
Mocking the orders given from the poop.

Her mates and boys were working her; we
stared.
What was the reason of this strange return,
This third annulling of the thing prepared?
No outward evil could our eyes discern.

Only like someone who has formed a plan
Beyond the pitch of common minds, she
sailed,
Mocked and deserted by the common man,
Made half divine to me for having failed.

We learned the reason soon; below the town
A stay had parted like a snapping reed,
"Warning," the men thought, "not to take her
down."
They took the omen, they would not proceed.

Days passed before another crew would sign.
The *Wanderer* lay in dock alone, unmanned,
Feared as a thing possessed by powers malign,
Bound under curses not to leave the land.

But under passing Time fear passes too;
That terror passed, the sailors' hearts grew
bold.
We learned in time that she had found a crew
And was bound out and southwards as of old.

And in contempt we thought, "A little while
Will bring her back again, dismantled, spoiled.
It is herself; she cannot change her style;
She has the habit now of being foiled."

So when a ship appeared among the haze,
We thought, "The *Wanderer* back again"; but no,
No *Wanderer* showed for many, many days,
Her passing lights made other waters glow.

But we would often think and talk of her,
Tell newer hands her story, wondering, then,
Upon what ocean she was *Wanderer,*
Bound to the cities built by foreign men.

And one by one our little conclave thinned,
Passed into ships and sailed and so away,
To drown in some great roaring of the wind,
Wanderers themselves, unhappy fortune's prey.

And Time went by me making memory dim,
Yet still I wondered if the *Wanderer* fared
Still pointing to the unreached ocean's rim,
Brightening the water where her breast was bared.

And much in ports abroad I eyed the ships,
Hoping to see her well-remembered form

Come with a curl of bubbles at her lips
Bright to her berth, the sovereign of the storm.

I never did, and many years went by,
Then, near a Southern port, one Christmas Eve,
I watched a gale go roaring through the sky,
Making the caldrons of the clouds upheave.

Then the wrack tattered and the stars appeared,
Millions of stars that seemed to speak in fire;
A byre cock cried aloud that morning neared,
The swinging wind-vane flashed upon the spire.

And soon men looked upon a glittering earth,
Intensely sparkling like a world new-born;
Only to look was spiritual birth,
So bright the raindrops ran along the thorn.

So bright they were, that one could almost pass
Beyond their twinkling to the source, and know
The glory pushing in the blade of grass,
That hidden soul which makes the flowers grow.

That soul was there apparent, not revealed,
Unearthly meanings covered every tree,
That wet grass grew in an immortal field,
Those waters fed some never-wrinkled sea.

The scarlet berries in the hedge stood out
Like revelations but the tongue unknown;
Even in the brooks a joy was quick: the trout
Rushed in a dumbness dumb to me alone.

All of the valley was aloud with brooks;
I walked the morning, breasting up the fells,
Taking again lost childhood from the rooks,
Whose cawing came above the Christmas bells.

I had not walked that glittering world before,
But up the hill a prompting came to me,
"This line of upland runs along the shore:
Beyond the hedgerow I shall see the sea."

And on the instant from beyond away
That long familiar sound, a ship's bell, broke
The hush below me in the unseen bay.
Old memories came: that inner prompting spoke.

And bright above the hedge a seagull's wings
Flashed and were steady upon empty air.

"A Power unseen," I cried, "prepares these things;
"Those are her bells, the *Wanderer* is there."

So, hurrying to the hedge and looking down,
I saw a mighty bay's wind-crinkled blue
Ruffling the image of a tranquil town,
With lapsing waters glittering as they grew.

And near me in the road the shipping swung,
So stately and so still in such great peace
That like to drooping crests their colours hung,
Only their shadows trembled without cease.

I did but glance upon those anchored ships.
Even as my thought had told, I saw her plain;
Tense, like a supple athlete with lean hips,
Swiftness at pause, the *Wanderer* come again—

Come as of old a queen, untouched by Time,
Resting the beauty that no seas could tire,
Sparkling as though the midnight's rain were rime,
Like a man's thoughts transfigured into fire.

And as I looked, one of her men began
To sing some simple tune of Christmas Day;
Among her crew the song spread, man to man,
Until the singing rang across the bay;

And soon in other anchored ships the men
Joined in the singing with clear throats, until
The farm-boy heard it up the windy glen,
Above the noise of sheep-bells on the hill.

Over the water came the lifted song—
Blind pieces in a mighty game we swing;
Life's battle is a conquest for the strong;
The meaning shows in the defeated thing.

AUGUST, 1914

How still this quiet cornfield is to-night!
By an intenser glow the evening falls,
Bringing, not darkness, but a deeper light;
Among the stooks a partridge covey calls.

The windows glitter on the distant hill;
Beyond the hedge the sheep-bells in the fold
Stumble on sudden music and are still;
The forlorn pinewoods droop above the wold.

An endless quiet valley reaches out
Past the blue hills into the evening sky;
Over the stubble, cawing, goes a rout
Of rooks from harvest, flagging as they fly.

So beautiful it is, I never saw
So great a beauty on these English fields,

Touched by the twilight's coming into awe,
Ripe to the soul and rich with summer's yields.

* * * *

These homes, this valley spread below me here,
The rooks, the tilted stacks, the beasts in pen,
Have been the heartfelt things, past-speaking dear
To unknown generations of dead men,

Who, century after century, held these farms,
And, looking out to watch the changing sky,
Heard, as we hear, the rumours and alarms
Of war at hand and danger pressing nigh,

And knew, as we know, that the message meant
The breaking off of ties, the loss of friends,
Death, like a miser getting in his rent,
And no new stones laid where the trackway ends,

The harvest not yet won, the empty bin,
The friendly horses taken from the stalls,
The fallow on the hill not yet brought in,
The cracks unplastered in the leaking walls,

Yet heard the news, and went discouraged
home,
And brooded by the fire with heavy mind,
With such dumb loving of the Berkshire loam
As breaks the dumb hearts of the English
kind;

Then sadly rose and left the well-loved
Downs,
And so by ship to sea, and knew no more
The fields of home, the byres, the market
towns,
Nor the dear outline of the English shore,

But knew the misery of the soaking trench,
The freezing in the rigging, the despair
In the revolting second of the wrench
When the blind soul is flung upon the air,

And died (uncouthly, most) in foreign lands
For some idea but dimly understood
Of an English city never built by hands
Which love of England prompted and made
good.

* * * *

If there be any life beyond the grave,
It must be near the men and things we love,
Some power of quick suggestion how to save,
Touching the living soul as from above,

An influence from the Earth from those dead
hearts
So passionate once, so deep, so truly kind,
That in the living child the spirit starts,
Feeling companioned still, not left behind.

Surely above these fields a spirit broods,
A sense of many watchers muttering near,
Of the lone Downland with the forlorn woods
Loved to the death, inestimably dear,

A muttering from beyond the veils of Death
From long-dead men, to whom this quiet
scene
Came among blinding tears with the last
breath,
The dying soldier's vision of his queen.

All the unspoken worship of those lives
Spent in forgotten wars at other calls
Glimmers upon these fields where evening
drives
Beauty like breath, so gently darkness falls,

Darkness that makes the meadows holier still.
The elm-trees sadden in the hedge, a sigh
Moves in the beech-clump on the haunted hill,
The rising planets deepen in the sky,

And silence broods like spirit on the brae,
A glimmering moon begins, the moonlight runs
Over the grasses of the ancient way
Rutted this morning by the passing guns.

BIOGRAPHY

When I am buried, all my thoughts and acts
Will be reduced to lists of dates and facts,
And long before this wandering flesh is rotten
The dates which made me will be all forgotten;
And none will know the gleam there used to be
About the feast-days freshly kept by me,
But men will call the golden hour of bliss
"About this time," or "shortly after this."

Men do not heed the rungs by which men climb
Those glittering steps, those milestones upon Time,
Those tombstones of dead selves, those hours of birth,
Those moments of the soul in years of earth.
They mark the height achieved, the main result,

The power of freedom in the perished cult,
The power of boredom in the dead man's deeds,
Not the bright moments of the sprinkled seeds.

By many waters and on many ways
I have known golden instants and bright days;
The day on which, beneath an arching sail,
I saw the Cordilleras and gave hail;
The summer day on which in heart's delight
I saw the Swansea Mumbles bursting white;
The glittering day when all the waves wore flags,
And the ship *Wanderer* came with sails in rags;
That curlew-calling time in Irish dusk,
When life became more splendid than its husk,
When the rent chapel on the brae at Slains
Shone with a doorway opening beyond brains;
The dawn when, with a brace-block's creaking cry,
Out of the mist a little barque slipped by,
Spilling the mist with changing gleams of red,
Then gone, with one raised hand and one turned head;

The howling evening when the spindrift's mists
Broke to display the Four Evangelists,
Snow-capped, divinely granite, lashed by breakers,
Wind-beaten bones of long since buried acres;
The night alone near water where I heard
All the sea's spirit spoken by a bird;
The English dusk when I beheld once more
(With eyes so changed) the ship, the citied shore,
The lines of masts, the streets so cheerly trod
(In happier seasons), and gave thanks to God.
All had their beauty, their bright moments' gift,
Their something caught from Time, the ever-swift.

All of those gleams were golden; but life's hands
Have given more constant gifts in changing lands,
And when I count those gifts, I think them such
As no man's bounty could have bettered much:
The gift of country life, near hills and woods,
Where happy waters sing in solitudes;

The gift of being near ships, of seeing each day
A city of ships with great ships under weigh;
The great street paved with water, filled with shipping,
And all the world's flags flying and seagulls dipping.

Yet when I am dust my penman may not know
Those water-trampling ships which made me glow,
But think my wonder mad and fail to find
Their glory, even dimly, from my mind,
And yet they made me. Not alone the ships,
But men hard-palmed from tallying-on to whips,
The two close friends of nearly twenty years,
Sea-followers both, sea-wrestlers and sea-peers,
Whose feet with mine wore many a bolthead bright
Treading the decks beneath the riding light.
Yet death will make that warmth of friendship cold,
And who'll know what one said and what one told
Our hearts' communion and the broken spells

When the loud call blew at the strike of bells?
No one, I know, yet let me be believed,
A soul entirely known is life achieved.

Years blank with hardship never speak a word,
Live in the soul to make the being stirred;
Towns can be prisons, where the spirit dulls
Away from mates and ocean-wandering hulls,
Away from all bright water and great hills
And sheep-walks, where the curlews cry their fills;
Away in towns, where eyes have nought to see
But dead museums and miles of misery,
And floating life unrooted from man's need,
And miles of fish-hooks baited to catch greed,
And life made wretched out of human ken,
And miles of shopping women served by men.
So, if the penman sums my London days,
Let him but say that there were holy ways,
Dull Bloomsbury streets of dull brick mansions old,
With stinking doors, where women stood to scold,
And drunken waits at Christmas with their horn,
Droning the news, in snow, that Christ was born;

And windy gas-lamps and the wet roads shining,
And that old carol of the midnight whining,
And that old room (above the noisy slum),
Where there was wine and fire and talk with some
Under strange pictures of the wakened soul,
To whom this earth was but a burnt-out coal.

O Time, bring back those midnights and those friends,
Those glittering moments that a spirit lends,
That all may be imagined from the flash,
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning gash,
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took
Light to send out to men in song or book.
Those friends who heard St. Pancras's bells strike two
Yet stayed until the barber's cockerel crew,
Talking of noble styles, the Frenchman's best,
The thought beyond great poets not expressed,
The glory of mood where human frailty failed,
The forts of human light not yet assailed,
Till the dim room had mind, and seemed to brood,

Binding our wills to mental brotherhood,
Till we became a college, and each night
Was discipline and manhood and delight,
Till our farewells, and winding down the stairs
At each grey dawn had meaning that Time spares,
That we, so linked, should roam the whole world round
Teaching the ways our brooding minds had found,
Making that room our Chapter, our one mind,
Where all that this world soiled should be refined.

Often at night I tread those streets again,
And see the alley glimmering in the rain;
Yet now I miss that sign of earlier tramps,
A house with shadows of plane-boughs under lamps,
The secret house where once a beggar stood
Trembling and blind to show his woe for food.
And now I miss that friend who used to walk
Home to my lodgings with me, deep in talk,
Wearing the last of night out in still streets
Trodden by us and policemen on their beats
And cats, but else deserted. Now I miss
That lively mind and guttural laugh of his,

And that strange way he had of making gleam,
Like something real, the art we used to dream.
London has been my prison; but my books,
Hills and great waters, labouring men and brooks,
Ships and deep friendships, and remembered days,
Which even now set all my mind ablaze,
As that June day when, in the red bricks' chinks,
I saw the old Roman ruins white with pinks,
And felt the hillside haunted even then
By not dead memory of the Roman men.
And felt the hillside thronged by souls unseen,
Who knew the interest in me, and were keen
That man alive should understand man dead,
So many centuries since the blood was shed.
And quickened with strange hush because this comer
Felt a strange soul alive behind the summer.

That other day on Ercall when the stones
Were sunbleached white, like long unburied bones,
While the bees droned and all the air was sweet
From honey buried underneath my feet.

Honey of purple heather and white clover
Sealed in its gummy bags till summer's over.
Then other days by water, by bright sea,
Clear as clean glass and my bright friend
with me,
The cove clean bottomed where we saw the
brown
Red spotted plaice go skimming six feet down
And saw the long fronds waving, white with
shells,
Waving, unfolding, drooping, to the swells;
That sadder day when we beheld the great
And terrible beauty of a Lammas spate
Roaring white-mouthed in all the great cliff's
gaps
Headlong, tree-tumbling fury of collapse,
While drenching clouds drove by and every
sense
Was water roaring or rushing or in offence
And mountain sheep stood huddled and blown
gaps gleamed
Where torn white hair of torrents shook and
streamed.
That sadder day when we beheld again
A spate going down in sunshine after rain,
When the blue reach of water leaping bright
Was one long ripple and clatter, flecked with
white,
And that far day, that never blotted page

When youth was bright like flowers about old age,
Fair generations bringing thanks for life
To that old kindly man and trembling wife
After their sixty years: Time never made
A better beauty since the Earth was laid,
Than that thanksgiving given to grey hair
For the great gift of life which brought them there.

Days of endeavour have been good: the days
Racing in cutters for the comrade's praise,
The day they led my cutter at the turn
Yet could not keep the lead and dropped astern.
The moment in the spurt when both boats, oars
Dipped in each other's wash and throats grew hoarse
And teeth ground into teeth and both strokes quickened
Lashing the sea, and gasps came, and hearts sickened
And coxwains damned us, dancing, banking stroke,
To put our weights on, though our hearts were broke
And both boats seemed to stick and sea seemed glue,

The tide a mill-race we were struggling through
And every quick recover gave us squints
Of them still there and oar-tossed water-glints,
And cheering came, our friends, our foemen cheering,
A long, wild, rallying murmur on the hearing
"Port Fore!" and "Starboard Fore!" "Port Fore!" "Port Fore!"
"Up with her, Starboard," and at that each oar
Lightened, though arms were bursting, and eyes shut
And the oak stretchers grunted in the strut,
And the curse quickened from the cox, our bows
Crashed, and drove talking water, we made vows,
Chastity vows and temperance; in our pain
We numbered things we'd never eat again
If we could only win; then came the yell
"Starboard," "Port Fore," and then a beaten bell
Rung as for fire to cheer us. "Now." Oars bent
Soul took the looms now body's bolt was spent,
"Give way, come on now!" "On now!" "On now!" "Starboard."

"Port Fore!" "Up with her, Port!" each cutter harboured
Ten eye-shut painsick strugglers, "Heave, oh, heave!"
Catcalls waked echoes like a shrieking sheave.
"Heave!" and I saw a back, then two. "Port Fore."
"Starboard!" "Come on!" I saw the midship oar
And knew we had done them. "Port Fore!" "Starboard!" "Now!"
I saw bright water spurting at their bow
Their cox' full face an instant. They were done.
The watchers' cheering almost drowned the gun.
We had hardly strength to toss our oars; our cry
Cheering the losing cutter was a sigh.

Other bright days of action have seemed great:
Wild days in a pampero off the Plate;
Good swimming days, at Hog Back or the Coves
Which the young gannet and the corbie loves;
Surf-swimming between rollers, catching breath

Between the advancing grave and breaking death,
Then shooting up into the sunbright smooth
To watch the advancing roller bare her tooth,
And days of labour also, loading, hauling;
Long days at winch or capstan, heaving pawling;
The days with oxen, dragging stone from blasting,
And dusty days in mills, and hot days masting.
Trucking on dust-dry deckings smooth as ice,
And hunts in mighty wool-racks after mice;
Mornings with buckwheat when the fields did blanch
With White Leghorns come from the chicken ranch.
Days near the spring upon the sunburnt hill,
Plying the maul or gripping tight the drill.
Delights of work most real, delights that change
The headache life of towns to rapture strange
Not known by townsmen, nor imagined; health
That puts new glory upon mental wealth
And makes the poor man rich. But that ends, too,
Health with its thoughts of life; and that bright view,

That sunny landscape from life's peak, that glory,
And all a glad man's comments on life's story,
And thoughts of marvellous towns and living men,
And what pens tell and all beyond the pen,
End, and are summed in words so truly dead,
They raise no image of the heart and head,
The life, the man alive, the friend we knew,
The mind ours argued with or listened to,
None; but are dead, and all life's keenness, all,
Is dead as print before the funeral,
Even deader after, when the dates are sought,
And cold minds disagree with what we thought.

This many-pictured world of many passions
Wears out the nations as a woman fashions,
And what life is is much to very few,
Men being so strange, so mad, and what men do
So good to watch or share; but when men count
Those hours of life that were a bursting fount,
Sparkling the dusty heart with living springs,
There seems a world, beyond our earthly things,
Gated by golden moments, each bright time

Opening to show the city white like lime,
High-towered and many-peopled. This made sure,
Work that obscures those moments seems impure,
Making our not-returning time of breath
Dull with the ritual and records of death,
That frost of fact by which our wisdom gives
Correctly stated death to all that lives.

Best trust the happy moments. What they gave
Makes man less fearful of the certain grave,
And gives his work compassion and new eyes,
The days that make us happy make us wise.

SHIPS

I cannot tell their wonder nor make known
Magic that once thrilled through me to the bone,
But all men praise some beauty, tell some tale,
Vent a high mood which makes the rest seem pale,
Pour their heart's blood to flourish one green leaf,
Follow some Helen for her gift of grief,
And fail in what they mean, whate'er they do:

You should have seen, man cannot tell to you
The beauty of the ships of that my city.

That beauty now is spoiled by the sea's pity:
For one may haunt the pier a score of times
Hearing St. Nicholas' bells ring out the chimes,
Yet never see those proud ones swaying home,
With mainyards backed and bows a cream of foam,
Those bows so lovely-curving, cut so fine
Those coulters of the many-bubbled brine,
As once, long since, when all the docks were filled
With that sea beauty man has ceased to build.

Yet though their splendour may have ceased to be,
Each played her sovereign part in making me.
Now I return my thanks with heart and lips
For the great queenliness of all those ships.

And first the first bright memory, still so clear,
An autumn evening in a golden year,
When in the last lit moments before dark
The *Chepica,* a steel-grey lovely barque,
Her trucks aloft in sun-glow red as blood,
Came to an anchor near us on the flood.
Then come so many ships that I could fill

Three docks with their fair hulls remembered still,
Each with her special memory's special grace,
Riding the sea, making the waves give place
To delicate high beauty; man's best strength,
Noble in every line in all their length.
Ailsa, Genista, ships, with long jib-booms,
The *Wanderer,* with great beauty and strange dooms,
Liverpool (mightiest then) superb, sublime,
The *California* huge, as slow as Time.
The *Cutty Sark,* the perfect *J. T. North,*
The loveliest barque my city has sent forth,
Dainty *Redgauntlet,* well remembered yet,
The splendid *Argus,* with her skysail set,
Stalwart *Drumcliff,* white-blocked majestic *Sierras,*
Divine bright ships, the water's standard bearers.
Melpomene, Euphrosyne, and their sweet
Sea-troubling sisters of the Fernie Fleet.
Corunna (in whom my friend died) and the old
Long since loved *Esmeralda* long since sold.
Centurion passed in Rio, *Glaucus* spoken,
Aladdin burnt, the *Bidston* water broken,
Yola in whom my friend sailed, *Dawpool* trim,
Fierce-bower *Egeria* plunging to the swim,

Stanmore wide-sterned, sweet *Cupica,* tall *Bard*
Queen in all harbours with her moonsail yard.

Though I tell many there must still be others,
McVickar Marshall's ships and Fernie Brothers'
Lochs, Counties, Shires, Drums, the countless lines
Whose house-flags all were once familiar signs
At high main trucks on Mersey's windy ways
When sun made all the wind-white water blaze.
Their names bring back old mornings when the docks
Shone with their house-flags and their painted blocks,
Their raking masts below the Custom House
And all the marvellous beauty of their bows.

Familiar steamers, too, majestic steamers,
Shearing Atlantic roller-tops to streamers
Umbria, Etruria, noble, still at sea,
The grandest, then, that man had brought to be.
Majestic, City of Paris, City of Rome,
Forever jealous racers, out and home.
The Alfred Holt's blue smokestacks down the stream,

The fair *Arabian* with her bows a-cream.
Booth liners, Anchor liners, Red Star liners,
The marks and styles of countless ship designers.
The *Magdalena, Puno, Potosi,*
Lost *Cotopaxi,* all well known to me.

These splendid ships, each with her grace, her glory,
Her memory of old song or comrade's story,
Still in my mind the image of life's need,
Beauty in hardest action, beauty indeed.
"They built great ships and sailed them" sounds most brave,
Whatever arts we have or fail to have;
I touch my country's mind, I come to grips
With half her purpose thinking of these ships.

That art untouched by softness, all that line
Drawn ringing hard to stand the test of brine;
That nobleness and grandeur, all that beauty
Born of a manly life and bitter duty;
That splendour of fine bows which yet could stand
The shock of rollers never checked by land.
That art of masts, sail-crowded, fit to break,
Yet stayed to strength, and back-stayed into rake,

The life demanded by that art, the keen
Eye-puckered, hard-cased seamen, silent, lean,
They are grander things than all the art of towns,
Their tests are tempests and the sea that drowns.
They are my country's line, her great art done
By strong brains labouring on the thought unwon,
They mark our passage as a race of men,
Earth will not see such ships as those agen.

SONNET ON THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE

(From the Portuguese of Antonio di Ferreiro)

That blessed sunlight, that once showed to me
My way to heaven more plain, more certainly,
And with her bright beams banished utterly
All trace of mortal sorrow far from me,
Has gone from me, has left her prison sad,
And I am blind and alone and gone astray,
Like a lost pilgrim on a desert way
Wanting the blessed guide that once he had.

Thus with a spirit bowed and mind a blur
I trace the holy steps where she has gone
By valleys and by meadows and by mountains,

And everywhere I catch a glimpse of her,
She takes me by the hand and leads me on,
And my eyes follow her, my eyes made
fountains.

THEY CLOSED HER EYES

(From the Spanish of Don Gustavo A. Becquér)

They closed her eyes,
They were still open;
They hid her face
With a white linen,
And some sobbing,
Others in silence,
From the sad bedroom
All came away.

The nightlight in a dish
Burned on the floor;
It threw on the wall
The bed's shadow,
And in that shadow
One saw sometimes
Drawn in sharp line
The body's shape.

The dawn appeared.
At its first whiteness,

With its thousand noises,
The town awoke.
Before that contrast
Of light and darkness,
Of life and strangeness,
I thought a moment—
My God, how lonely
The dead are!

On the shoulders of men
To church they bore her,
And in a chapel
They left her bier.
There they surrounded
Her pale body
With yellow candles
And black stuffs.

At the last stroke
Of the ringing for the souls
An old crone finished
Her last prayers.
She crossed the narrow nave,
The doors moaned,
And the holy place
Remained deserted.

From a clock one heard
The measured ticking,

And from a candle
The guttering.
All things there
Were so dark and mournful,
So cold and rigid,
That I thought a moment—
My God, how lonely
The dead are!

From the high belfry
The tongue of iron
Clanged, giving out
A last farewell.
Crape on their clothes,
Her friends and kindred
Passed by in line
In homage to her.

In the last vault,
Dark and narrow,
The pickaxe opened
A niche at one end;
They laid her away there.
Soon they bricked the place up,
And with a gesture
Bade grief farewell.

Pickaxe on shoulder,
The gravedigger,

Singing between his teeth,
Passed out of sight.
The night came down
It was all silent.
Alone in darkness,
I thought a moment—
My God, how lonely
The dead are!

In the dark nights
Of bitter winter,
When the wind makes
The rafters creak,
When the violent rain
Lashes the windows,
Lonely I remember
That poor girl.

There falls the rain
With its noise eternal
There the north wind
Fights with the rain.
Stretched in the hollow
Of the damp bricks,
Perhaps her bones
Freeze with the cold.

Does the dust return to dust?
Does the soul fly to heaven?

Or is all vile matter,
Rottenness, filthiness?
I know not, but
There is something—something—
Something which gives me
Loathing, terror,
To leave the dead
So alone, so wretched.

Selections from
GOOD FRIDAY
A DRAMATIC POEM

MADMAN.

They cut my face, there's blood upon my brow.
So, let it run, I am an old man now,
An old, blind beggar picking filth for bread.
Once I wore silk, drank wine,
Spent gold on women, feasted, all was mine;
But this uneasy current in my head
Burst, one full moon, and cleansed me, then I saw
Truth like a perfect crystal, life its flaw,
I told the world, but I was mad, they said.

I had a valley farm above a brook,
My sheep bells there were sweet,

And in the summer heat
My mill wheels turned, yet all these things
they took;
Ah, and I gave them, all things I forsook
But that green blade of wheat,
My own soul's courage, that they did not take.
I will go on, although my old heart ache.
Not long, not long.
Soon I shall pass behind
This changing veil to that which does not
change,
My tired feet will range
In some green valley of eternal mind
Where Truth is daily like the water's song.

The wild-duck stringing through the sky,
Are south away.
Their green necks glitter as they fly,
The lake is grey,
So still, so lone, the fowler never heeds.
The wind goes rustle, rustle, through the
reeds.

* * * *

There they find peace to have their own wild
souls.
In that still lake,
Only the moonrise or the wind controls
The way they take,

Through the grey reeds, the cocking moorhen's lair,
Rippling the pool, or over leagues of air.

* * * *

Not thus, not thus are the wild souls of men.
No peace for those
Who step beyond the blindness of the pen
To where the skies unclose.
For them the spitting mob, the cross, the crown of thorns,
The bull gone mad, the saviour on his horns.

* * * *

Beauty and Peace have made
No peace, no still retreat,
No solace, none.
Only the unafraid
Before life's roaring street
Touch Beauty's feet,
Know Truth, do as God bade,
Become God's son. [*Pause.*]

Darkness come down, cover a brave man's pain.
Let the bright soul go back to God again.
Cover that tortured flesh, it only serves
To hold that thing which other power nerves.
Darkness, come down, let it be midnight here,

In the dark night the untroubled soul sings
clear. [*It darkens.*]
I have been scourged, blinded and crucified,
My blood burns on the stones of every street
In every town; wherever people meet
I have been hounded down, in anguish died.
[*It darkens.*]
The creaking door of flesh rolls slowly back.
Nerve by red nerve the links of living crack,
Loosing the soul to tread another track.

Beyond the pain, beyond the broken clay,
A glimmering country lies
Where life is being wise,
All of the beauty seen by truthful eyes
Are lilies there, growing beside the way.
Those golden ones will loose the torted
hands,
Smooth the scarred brow, gather the break-
ing soul,
Whose earthly moments drop like falling
sands
To leave the spirit whole.

Only a penny, a penny,
Lilies brighter than any,
Lilies whiter than snow.
Beautiful lilies grow
Wherever the truth so sweet

Has trodden with bloody feet,
Has stood with a bloody brow.
Friend, it is over now,
The passion, the sweat, the pains,
Only the truth remains.

* * * *

I cannot see what others see;
Wisdom alone is kind to me,
Wisdom that comes from Agony.

* * * *

Wisdom that lives in the pure skies,
The untouched star, the spirit's eyes;
O Beauty, touch me, make me wise.

Selections from

LOLLINGDON DOWNS

O wretched man, that for a little mile
Crawls beneath heaven for his brother's blood,
Whose days the planets number with their style,
To whom all earth is slave, all living, food!
O withering man, within whose folded shell
Lies yet the seed, the spirit's quickening corn,
That Time and Sun will change out of the cell

Into green meadows, in the world unborn!
If Beauty be a dream, do but resolve
And fire shall come, that in the stubborn clay
Works to make perfect till the rocks dissolve,
The barriers burst, and Beauty takes her way:
Beauty herself, within whose blossoming Spring
Even wretched man shall clap his hands and sing.

Out of the special cell's most special sense
Came the suggestion when the light was sweet;
All skill, all beauty, all magnificence,
Are hints so caught, man's glimpse of the complete.
And, though the body rots, that sense survives;
Being of life's own essence, it endures
(Fruit of the spirit's tillage in men's lives)
Round all this ghost that wandering flesh immures.
That is our friend, who, when the iron brain
Assails, or the earth clogs, or the sun hides,
Is the good God to whom none calls in vain,
Man's Achieved Good, which, being Life, abides:
The man-made God, that man in happy breath
Makes in despite of Time and dusty Death.

I could not sleep for thinking of the sky,
The unending sky, with all its million suns
Which turn their planets everlastingly
In nothing, where the fire-haired comet runs.
If I could sail that nothing, I should cross
Silence and emptiness with dark stars passing;
Then, in the darkness, see a point of gloss
Burn to a glow, and glare, and keep amassing,
And rage into a sun with wandering planets,
And drop behind; and then, as I proceed,
See his last light upon his last moon's granites
Die to a dark that would be night indeed:
Night where my soul might sail a million years
In nothing, not even Death, not even tears.

How did the nothing come, how did these fires,
These million-leagues of fires, first toss their hair,
Licking the moons from heaven in their ires,
Flinging them forth for them to wander there?
What was the Mind? Was it a mind which thought?

Or chance? or law? or conscious law? or power?
Or a vast balance by vast clashes wrought?
Or Time at trial with Matter for an hour?
Or is it all a body where the cells
Are living things supporting something strange,
Whose mighty heart the singing planet swells
As it shoulders nothing in unending change?
Is this green earth of many-peopled pain
Part of a life, a cell within a brain?

It may be so; but let the unknown be.
We, on this earth, are servants of the sun:
Out of the sun comes all the quick in me,
His golden touch is life to everyone.
His power it is that makes us spin through space;
His youth is April and his manhood bread;
Beauty is but a looking on his face;
He clears the mind, he makes the roses red.
What he may be, who knows? But we are his;
We roll through nothing round him, year by year,
The withering leaves upon a tree which is,
Each with his greed, his little power, his fear,
What we may be, who knows? But every one
Is dust on dust a servant of the sun.

What is this life which uses living cells
It knows not how nor why, for no known end,
This soul of man upon whose fragile shells
Of blood and brain his very powers depend?
Pour out its little blood or touch its brain,
The thing is helpless, gone, no longer known;
The carrion cells are never man again,
No hand relights the little candle blown.
It comes not from Without, but from the sperm
Fed in the womb; it is a man-made thing
That takes from man its power to live a term,
Served by live cells of which it is the King.
Can it be blood and brain? It is most great.
Through blood and brain alone it wrestles Fate.

Can it be blood and brain, this transient force
Which, by an impulse, seizes flesh and grows
To man, the thing less splendid than the horse,
More blind than owls, less lovely than the rose?
O, by a power unknown it works the cells
Of blood and brain; it has the power to see
Beyond the apparent thing the something else
Which it inspires dust to bring to be.
Both blood and brain are its imperfect tools,

Easily wrecked, soon worn, slow to attain;
Only by years of toil the master rules
To lovely ends those servants, blood and brain.
And Death, a touch, a germ, has still the force
To make him ev'n as the rose, the owl, the horse.

Not only blood and brain its servants are;
There is a finer power that needs no slaves,
Whose lovely service distance cannot bar,
Nor the green sea with all her hell of waves;
Nor snowy mountains, nor the desert sand,
Nor heat, nor storm, it bends to no control;
It is a stretching of the spirit's hand
To touch the brother's or the sister's soul;
So that from darkness in the narrow room
I can step forth and be about her heart,
Needing no star, no lantern in the gloom,
No word from her, no pointing on the chart,
Only red knowledge of a window flung
Wide to the night, and calling without tongue.

Here in the self is all that man can know
Of Beauty, all the wonder, all the power,
All the unearthly colour, all the glow,
Here in the self which withers like a flower;
Here in the self which fades as hours pass,

And droops and dies and rots and is forgotten
Sooner, by ages, than the mirroring glass
In which it sees its glory still unrotten.
Here in the flesh, within the flesh, behind,
Swift in the blood and throbbing on the bone,
Beauty herself, the universal mind,
Eternal April wandering alone;
The God, the holy Ghost, the atoning Lord,
Here in the flesh, the never yet explored.

Flesh, I have knocked at many a dusty door,
Gone down full many a windy midnight lane,
Probed in old walls and felt along the floor,
Pressed in blind hope the lighted window-pane.
But useless all, though sometimes when the moon
Was full in heaven and the sea was full,
Along my body's alleys came a tune
Played in the tavern by the Beautiful.
Then for an instant I have felt at point
To find and seize her, whosoe'er she be,
Whether some saint whose glory doth anoint
Those whom she loves, or but a part of me,
Or something that the things not understood
Make for their uses out of flesh and blood.

But all has passed, the tune has died away,
The glamour gone, the glory; is it chance?

Is the unfeeling mud stabbed by a ray
Cast by an unseen splendour's great advance?
Or does the glory gather crumb by crumb
Unseen, within, as coral islands rise,
Till suddenly the apparitions come
Above the surface, looking at the skies?
Or does sweet Beauty dwell in lovely things
Scattering the holy hintings of her name
In women, in dear friends, in flowers, in springs,
In the brook's voice, for us to catch the same?
Or is it we who are Beauty, we who ask?
We by whose gleams the world fulfils its task.

These myriad days, these many thousand hours,
A man's long life, so choked with dusty things,
How little perfect poise with perfect powers,
Joy at the heart and Beauty at the springs.
One hour, or two, or three, in long years scattered
Sparks from a smithy that have fired a thatch,
Are all that life has given and all that mattered;
The rest, all heaving at a moveless latch.
For these, so many years of useless toil,
Despair, endeavour, and again despair,

Sweat, that the base machine may have its oil,
Idle delight to tempt one everywhere.
A life upon the cross. To make amends,
Three flaming memories that the deathbed ends.

There, on the darkened deathbed, dies the brain
That flared three several times in seventy years.
It cannot lift the silly hand again,
Nor speak, nor sing, it neither sees nor hears;
And muffled mourners put it in the ground
And then go home, and in the earth it lies
Too dark for vision and too deep for sound,
The million cells that made a good man wise.
Yet for a few short years an influence stirs,
A sense or wraith or essence of him dead,
Which makes insensate things its ministers
To those beloved, his spirit's daily bread;
Then that, too, fades; in book or deed a spark
Lingers, then that, too, fades; then all is dark.

So in the empty sky the stars appear,
Are bright in heaven marching through the sky,
Spinning their planets, each one to his year,
Tossing their fiery hair until they die;

Then in the tower afar the watcher sees
The sun, that burned, less noble than it was,
Less noble still, until by dim degrees
No spark of him is specklike in his glass.
Then blind and dark in heaven the sun proceeds,
Vast, dead and hideous, knocking on his moons,
Till crashing on his like creation breeds,
Striking such life, a constellation swoons;
From dead things striking fire a new sun springs,
New fire, new life, new planets with new wings.

It may be so with us, that in the dark,
When we have done with time and wander space,
Some meeting of the blind may strike a spark,
And to Death's empty mansion give a grace.
It may be, that the loosened soul may find
Some new delight of living without limbs,
Bodiless joy of flesh-untrammelled mind,
Peace like a sky where starlike spirit swims.
It may be, that the million cells of sense,
Loosed from their seventy years' adhesion, pass
Each to some joy of changed experience,

Weight in the earth or glory in the grass.
It may be, that we cease; we cannot tell.
Even if we cease, life is a miracle.

What am I, Life? A thing of watery salt
Held in cohesion by unresting cells
Which work they know not why, which never halt,
Myself unwitting where their master dwells.
I do not bid them, yet they toil, they spin:
A world which uses me as I use them,
Nor do I know which end or which begin,
Nor which to praise, which pamper, which condemn.
So, like a marvel in a marvel set,
I answer to the vast, as wave by wave
The sea of air goes over, dry or wet,
Or the full moon comes swimming from her cave,
Or the great sun comes north, this myriad I
Tingles, not knowing how, yet wondering why.

If I could get within this changing I,
This ever altering thing which yet persists,
Keeping the features it is reckoned by,
While each component atom breaks or twists,
If, wandering past strange groups of shifting forms,
Cells at their hidden marvels hard at work,

Pale from much toil, or red from sudden storms,
I might attain to where the Rulers lurk.
If, pressing past the guards in those grey gates,
The brain's most folded, intertwisted shell,
I might attain to that which alters fates,
The King, the supreme self, the Master Cell;
Then, on Man's earthly peak, I might behold
The unearthly self beyond, unguessed, untold.

What is this atom which contains the whole,
This miracle which needs adjuncts so strange,
This, which imagined God and is the soul,
The steady star persisting amid change?
What waste, that smallness of such power should need
Such clumsy tools so easy to destroy,
Such wasteful servants difficult to feed,
Such indirect dark avenues to joy.
Why, if its business is not mainly earth,
Should it demand such heavy chains to sense?
A heavenly thing demands a swifter birth,
A quicker hand to act intelligence;
An earthly thing were better like the rose,
At peace with clay from which its beauty grows.

Ah, we are neither heaven nor earth, but men;
Something that uses and despises both,

That takes its earth's contentment in the pen,
Then sees the world's injustice and is wroth,
And flinging off youth's happy promise, flies
Up to some breach, despising earthly things,
And, in contempt of hell and heaven, dies
Rather than bear some yoke of priests or kings.
Our joys are not of heaven nor earth, but man's,
A woman's beauty, or a child's delight,
The trembling blood when the discoverer scans
The sought-for world, the guessed-at satellite;
The ringing scene, the stone at point to blush
For unborn men to look at and say "Hush."

Roses are beauty, but I never see
Those blood drops from the burning heart of June
Glowing like thought upon the living tree
Without a pity that they die so soon,
Die into petals, like those roses old,
Those women, who were summer in men's hearts
Before the smile upon the Sphinx was cold
Or sand had hid the Syrian and his arts.
O myriad dust of beauty that lies thick
Under our feet that not a single grain

But stirred and moved in beauty and was quick
For one brief moon and died nor lived again;
But when the moon rose lay upon the grass
Pasture to living beauty, life that was.

Over the church's door they moved a stone,
And there, unguessed, forgotten, mortared up,
Lay the priest's cell where he had lived alone.
There was his ashy hearth, his drinking cup,
There was his window whence he saw the Host,
The God whose beauty quickened bread and wine;
The skeleton of a religion lost,
The ghostless bones of what had been divine.
O many a time the dusty masons come
Knocking their trowels in the stony brain
To cells where perished priests had once a home,
Or where devout brows pressed the window pane,
Watching the thing made God, the God whose bones
Bind underground our soul's foundation stones.

O little self, within whose smallness lies
All that man was, and is, and will become,

Atom unseen that comprehends the skies
And tells the tracks by which the planets
roam;
That, without moving, knows the joys of
wings,
The tiger's strength, the eagle's secrecy,
And in the hovel can consort with kings,
Or clothe a God with his own mystery.
O with what darkness do we cloak thy light,
What dusty folly gather thee for food,
Thou who alone art knowledge and delight,
The heavenly bread, the beautiful, the good.
O living self, O God, O morning star,
Give us thy light, forgive us what we are.

I went into the fields, but you were there
Waiting for me, so all the summer flowers
Were only glimpses of your starry powers;
Beautiful and inspired dust they were.

I went down by the waters, and a bird
Sang with your voice in all the unknown tones
Of all that self of you I have not heard,
So that my being felt you to the bones.

I went into the house, and shut the door
To be alone, but you were there with me;
All beauty in a little room may be,
Though the roof lean and muddy be the floor.

Then in my bed I bound my tired eyes
To make a darkness for my weary brain;
But like a presence you were there again,
Being and real, beautiful and wise,

So that I could not sleep, and cried aloud,
"You strange grave thing, what is it you would say?"
The redness of your dear lips dimmed to grey,
The waters ebbed, the moon hid in a cloud.

Wherever beauty has been quick in clay
Some effluence of it lives, a spirit dwells,
Beauty that death can never take away
Mixed with the air that shakes the flower bells;
So that by waters where the apples fall,
Or in lone glens, or valleys full of flowers,
Or in the streets where bloody tidings call,
The haunting waits the mood that makes it ours.
Then at a turn, a word, an act, a thought,
Such difference comes; the spirit apprehends
That place's glory; for where beauty fought
Under the veil the glory never ends;
But the still grass, the leaves, the trembling flower

Keep, through dead time, that everlasting hour.

Not for the anguish suffered is the slur,
Not for the woman's taunts, the mocks of men;
No, but because you never welcomed her,
Her of whose beauty I am only the pen.

There was a dog, dog-minded, with dog's eyes,
Damned by a dog's brute-nature to be true.
Something within her made his spirit wise;
He licked her hand, he knew her; not so you.

When all adulterate beauty has gone by,
When all inanimate matter has gone down,
We will arise and walk, that dog and I,
The only two who knew her in the town.

We'll range the pleasant mountain side by side,
Seeking the blood-stained flowers where Christs have died.

You will remember me in days to come,
With love, or pride, or pity, or contempt,
So will my friends (not many friends, yet some),

When this my life will be a dream out-
dreamt;
And one, remembering friendship by the fire,
And one, remembering love time in the dark,
And one, remembering unfulfilled desire,
Will sigh, perhaps, yet be beside the mark;
For this my body with its wandering ghost
Is nothing solely but an empty grange,
Dark in a night that owls inhabit most,
Yet when the King rides by there comes a
change
The windows gleam, the cresset's fiery hair
Blasts the blown branch and beauty lodges
there.

If Beauty be at all, if, beyond sense,
There be a wisdom piercing into brains,
Why should the glory wait on impotence,
Biding its time till blood is in the veins?

There is no beauty, but, when thought is
quick,
Out of the noisy sickroom of ourselves
Some flattery comes to try to cheat the sick,
Some drowsy drug is groped for on the
shelves.

There is no beauty, for we tread a scene
Red to the eye with blood of living things;

Thought is but joy from murder that has
been,
Life is but brute at war upon its kings.

There is no beauty, nor could beauty care
For us, this dust, that men make everywhere.

If all be governed by the moving stars,
If passing planets bring events to be,
Searing the face of Time with bloody scars,
Drawing men's souls even as the moon the
sea,
If as they pass they make a current pass
Across man's life and heap it to a tide,
We are but pawns, ignobler than the grass
Cropped by the beast and crunched and tossed
aside.
Is all this beauty that doth inhabit heaven
Train of a planet's fire? Is all this lust
A chymic means by warring stars contriven
To bring the violets out of Cæsar's dust?
Better be grass, or in some hedge unknown
The spilling rose whose beauty is its own.

In emptiest furthest heaven where no stars
are,
Perhaps some planet of our master sun
Still rolls an unguessed orbit round its star,
Unthought, unseen, unknown of anyone.
Roving dead space according to its law,

Casting our light on burnt-out suns and blind,
Singing in the frozen void its word of awe,
One wandering thought in all that idiot mind.
And, in some span of many a thousand year,
Passing through heaven its influence may arouse
Beauty unguessed in those who habit here,
And men may rise with glory on their brows
And feel new life like fire, and see the old
Fall from the dead, the bronze's broken mould.

Death lies in wait for you, you wild thing in the wood,
Shy-footed beauty dear, half-seen, half-understood.
Glimpsed in the beech-wood dim and in the dropping fir,
Shy like a fawn and sweet and beauty's minister.
Glimpsed as in flying clouds by night the little moon,
A wonder, a delight, a paleness passing soon.

Only a moment held, only an hour seen,
Only an instant known in all that life has been,
One instant in the sand to drink that gush of grace,
The beauty of your way, the marvel of your face.

Death lies in wait for you, but few short
hours he gives;
I perish even as you by whom all spirit lives.
Come to me, spirit, come, and fill my hour
of breath
With hours of life in life that pay no toll to
death.

Go, spend your penny, Beauty, when you will,
In the grave's darkness let the stamp be lost.
The water still will bubble from the hill,
And April quick the meadows with her ghost
Over the grass the daffodils will shiver,
The primroses with their pale beauty abound,
The blackbird be a lover and make quiver
With his glad singing the great soul of the
ground;
So that if the body rot, it will not matter;
Up in the earth the great game will go on,
The coming of spring and the running of the
water,
And the young things glad of the womb's
darkness gone.
And the joy we felt will be a part of the
glory
In the lover's kiss that makes the old couple's
story.

Let that which is to come be as it may,

Darkness, extinction, justice, life intense,
The flies are happy in the summer day,
Flies will be happy many summers hence.
Time with his antique breeds that built the
Sphinx,
Time with her men to come whose wings will
tower,
Poured and will pour, not as the wise man
thinks,
But with blind force, to each his little hour.
And when the hour has struck, comes death
or change,
Which, whether good or ill we cannot tell,
But the blind planet will wander through her
range
Bearing men like us who will serve as well.
The sun will rise, the winds that ever move
Will blow our dust that once were men in
love.

From GALLIPOLI

Epilogue

Even so was wisdom proven blind,
So courage failed, so strength was chained;
Even so the gods, whose seeing mind
Is not as ours, ordained.

Selections from
REYNARD THE FOX

On old Cold Crendon's windy tops
Grows wintrily Blown Hilcote Copse,
Wind-bitten beech with badger barrows,
Where brocks eat wasp-grubs with their marrows,
And foxes lie on short-grassed turf,
Nose between paws, to hear the surf
Of wind in the beeches drowsily.
There was our fox bred lustily
Three years before, and there he berthed,
Under the beech-roots snugly earthed,
With a roof of flint and a floor of chalk
And ten bitten hens' heads each on its stalk,
Some rabbits' paws, some fur from scuts,
A badger's corpse and a smell of guts.
And there on the night before my tale
He trotted out for a point in the vale.

* * * *

He saw, from the cover edge, the valley
Go trooping down with its droops of sally
To the brimming river's lipping bend,
And a light in the inn at Water's End.
He heard the owl go hunting by
And the shriek of the mouse the owl made die,
And the purr of the owl as he tore the red

Strings from between his claws and fed;
The smack of joy of the horny lips
Marbled green with the blobby strips.
He saw the farms where the dogs were barking,
Cold Crendon Court and Copsecote Larking;
The fault with the spring as bright as gleed,
Green-slash-laced with water-weed.
A glare in the sky still marked the town,
Though all folk slept and the blinds were down,
The street lamps watched the empty square,
The night-cat sang his evil there.

* * * *

The fox's nose tipped up and round,
Since smell is a part of sight and sound.
Delicate smells were drifting by,
The sharp nose flaired them heedfully;
Partridges in the clover stubble,
Crouched in a ring for the stoat to nubble.
Rabbit bucks beginning to box;
A scratching place for the pheasant cocks,
A hare in the dead grass near the drain,
And another smell like the spring again.

* * * *

A faint rank taint like April coming,
It touched his heart till his blood went drumming,

For somewhere out by Ghost Heath Stubs
Was a roving vixen wanting cubs.
Over the valley, floating faint
On a warmth of windflaw, came the taint;
He cocked his ears, he upped his brush,
And he went upwind like an April thrush.

* * * *

By the Roman Road to Braiches Ridge,
Where the fallen willow makes a bridge,
Over the brook by White Hart's Thorn
To the acres thin with pricking corn,
Over the sparse green hair of the wheat,
By the Clench Brook Mill at Clench Brook Leat,
Through Cowfoot Pastures to Nonely Stevens,
And away to Poltrewood St. Jevons.
Past Tott Hill Down all snaked with meuses,
Past Clench St. Michael and Naunton Crucis,
Past Howle's Oak Farm where the raving brain
Of a dog who heard him foamed his chain;
Then off, as the farmer's window opened,
Past Stonepits Farms to Upton Hope End,
Over short sweet grass and worn flint arrows
And the three dumb hows of Tencombe Barrows.
And away and away with a rolling scramble,

Through the sally and up the bramble,
With a nose for the smells the night wind carried,
And his red fell clean for being married;
For clicketting time and Ghost Heath Wood
Had put the violet in his blood.

* * * *

At Tencombe Rings near the Manor Linney
His foot made the great black stallion whinny,
And the stallion's whinny aroused the stable
And the bloodhound bitches stretched their cable,
And the clink of the bloodhounds' chain aroused
The sweet-breathed kye as they chewed and drowsed,
And the stir of the cattle changed the dream
Of the cat in the loft to tense green gleam.
The red-wattled black cock hot from Spain
Crowed from his perch for dawn again,
His breast-pufft hens, one-legged on perch,
Gurgled, beak-down, like men in church,
They crooned in the dark, lifting one red eye
In the raftered roost as the fox went by.

* * * *

By Tencombe Regis and Slaughters Court,
Through the great grass square of Roman Fort,

By Nun's Wood Yews and the Hungry Hill,
And the Corpse Way Stones all standing still
By Seven Springs Mead to Deerlip Brook,
And a lolloping leap to Water Hook.
Then with eyes like sparks and his blood awoken,
Over the grass to Water's Oaken,
And over the hedge and into ride
In Ghost Heath Wood for his roving bride.

* * * *

Before the dawn he had loved and fed
And found a kennel, and gone to bed
On a shelf of grass in a thick of gorse
That would bleed a hound and blind a horse.
There he slept in the mild west weather
With his nose and brush well tuckt together,
He slept like a child, who sleeps yet hears
With the self who needs neither eyes nor ears.

* * * *

He slept while the pheasant cock untucked
His head from his wing, flew down and kukked,
While the drove of the starlings whirred and wheeled
Out of the ash-trees into field,

While with great black flags that flogged and paddled
The rooks went out to the plough and straddled,
Straddled wide on the moist red cheese
Of the furrows driven at Uppat's Leas.

* * * *

Down in the village men awoke,
The chimneys breathed with a faint blue smoke.
The fox slept on, though tweaks and twitches,
Due to his dreams, ran down his flitches.

* * * *

The cows were milked and the yards were sluict,
And cocks and hens let out of roost,
Windows were opened, mats were beaten,
All men's breakfasts were cooked and eaten;
But out in the gorse on the grassy shelf
The sleeping fox looked after himself.

* * * *

Deep in his dream he heard the life
Of the woodland seek for food or wife,
The hop of a stoat, a buck that thumped,
The squeal of a rat as a weasel jumped,
The blackbird's chackering scattering crying,

The rustling bents from the rabbits flying,
Cows in a byre, and distant men,
And Condicote church-clock striking ten.

* * * *

At eleven o'clock a boy went past,
With a rough-haired terrier following fast.
The boy's sweet whistle and dog's quick yap
Woke the fox from out of his nap.

* * * *

He rose and stretched till the claws in his pads
Stuck hornily out like long back gads.
He listened a while, and his nose went round
To catch the smell of the distant sound.

* * * *

The windward smells came free from taint—
They were rabbit, strongly, with lime-kiln, faint,
A wild-duck, likely, at Sars Holt Pond,
And sheep on the Sars Holt Down beyond.

* * * *

The leeward smells were much less certain,
For the Ghost Heath Hill was like a curtain,
Yet vague, from the leeward, now and then,
Came muffled sounds like the sound of men.

* * * *

He moved to his right to a clearer space,
And all his soul came into his face,
Into his eyes and into his nose,
As over the hill a murmur rose.
His ears were cocked and his keen nose flaired,
He sneered with his lips till his teeth were bared,
He trotted right and lifted a pad
Trying to test what foes he had.

* * * *

On Ghost Heath turf was a steady drumming
Which sounded like horses quickly coming,
It died as the hunt went down the dip,
Then Malapert yelped at Myngs's whip.
A bright iron horseshoe clinkt on stone,
Then a man's voice spoke, not one alone,
Then a burst of laughter, swiftly still,
Muffled away by Ghost Heath Hill.
Then, indistinctly, the clop, clip, clep,
On Brady Ride, of a horse's step.
Then silence, then, in a burst, much clearer,
Voices and horses coming nearer,
And another noise, of a pit-pat beat
On the Ghost Hill grass, of foxhound feet.

* * * *

He sat on his haunches listening hard,
While his mind went over the compass card.

Men were coming and rest was done,
But he still had time to get fit to run;
He could outlast horse and outrace hound,
But men were devils from Lobs's Pound.
Scent was burning, the going good,
The world one lust for a fox's blood,
The main earths stopped and the drains put to,
And fifteen miles to the land he knew.
But of all the ills, the ill least pleasant
Was to run in the light when men were present
Men in the fields to shout and sign
For a lift of hounds to a fox's line.
Men at the earth, at the long point's end,
Men at each check and none his friend,
Guessing each shift that a fox contrives;
But still, needs must when the devil drives.

* * * *

He readied himself, then a soft horn blew,
Then a clear voice carolled, "Ed-hoick! Eleu!"
Then the wood-end rang with the clear voice crying
And the crackle of scrub where hounds were trying.
Then the horn blew nearer, a hound's voice quivered,

Then another, then more, till his body shivered,
He left his kennel and trotted thence
With his ears flexed back and his nerves all tense.

He trotted down with his nose intent
For a fox's line to cross his scent,
It was only fair (he being a stranger)
That the native fox should have the danger.
Danger was coming, so swift, so swift,
That the pace of his trot began to lift,
The blue-winged Judas, a jay began
Swearing, hounds whimpered, air stank of man.

* * * *

He hurried his trotting, he now felt frighted,
It was his poor body made hounds excited.
He felt as he ringed the great wood through,
That he ought to make for the land he knew.

* * * *

Then the hounds' excitement quivered and quickened,
Then a horn blew death till his marrow sickened,
Then the wood behind was a crash of cry
For the blood in his veins; it made him fly.

* * * *

They were on his line; it was death to stay.
He must make for home by the shortest way,
But with all this yelling and all this wrath
And all these devils, how find a path?

* * * *

He ran like a stag to the wood's north corner,
Where the hedge was thick and the ditch a yawner,
But the scarlet glimpse of Myngs on Turk,
Watching the woodside, made him shirk.

* * * *

He ringed the wood and looked at the south.
What wind there was blew into his mouth.
But close to the woodland's blackthorn thicket
Was Dansey, still as a stone, on picket.
At Dansey's back were a twenty more
Watching the cover and pressing fore.

* * * *

The fox drew in and flaired with his muzzle.
Death was there if he messed the puzzle.
There were men without and hounds within,
A crying that stiffened the hair on skin,
Teeth in cover and death without,
Both deaths coming, and no way out.

* * * *

His nose ranged swiftly, his heart beat fast,
Then a crashing cry rose up in a blast,

Then horse-hooves trampled, then horses' flitches
Burst their way through the hazel switches.
Then the horn again made the hounds like mad,
And a man, quite near, said, "Found, by Gad!"
And a man, quite near, said, "Now he'll break.
Lark's Leybourne Copse is the line he'll take."
And men moved up with their talk and stink
And the traplike noise of the horseshoe clink.
Men whose coming meant death from teeth
In a worrying wrench, with him beneath.

* * * *

The fox sneaked down by the cover side
(With his ears flexed back) as a snake would glide;
He took the ditch at the cover-end,
He hugged the ditch as his only friend.
The blackbird cock with the golden beak
Got out of his way with a jabbering shriek,
And the shriek told Tom on the raking bay
That for eighteenpence he was gone away.

* * * *

He ran in the hedge in the triple growth
Of bramble and hawthorn, glad of both,

Till a couple of fields were past, and then
Came the living death of the dread of men.

* * * *

Then, as he listened, he heard a "Hoy!"
Tom Dansey's horn and "Awa-wa-woy!"
Then all hounds crying with all their forces,
Then a thundering down of seventy horses.
Robin Dawe's horn and halloos of "Hey
Hark Hollar, Hoik!" and "Gone away!"
"Hark Hollar Hoik!" and a smack of the whip.
A yelp as a tail hound caught the clip.
"Hark Hollar, Hark Hollar!" then Robin made
Pip go crash through the cut and laid.
Hounds were over and on his line
With a head like bees upon Tipple Tine.
The sound of the nearness sent a flood
Of terror of death through the fox's blood.
He upped his brush and he cocked his nose,
And he went upwind as a racer goes.

* * * *

Bold Robin Dawe was over first,
Cheering his hounds on at the burst;
The field were spurring to be in it.
"Hold hard, sirs, give them half a minute,"

Came from Sir Peter on his white.
The hounds went romping with delight
Over the grass and got together,
The tail hounds galloped hell-for-leather
After the pack at Myngs's yell.
A cry like every kind of bell
Rang from these rompers as they raced.

* * * *

The riders, thrusting to be placed,
Jammed down their hats and shook their horses;
The hounds romped past with all their forces,
They crashed into the blackthorn fence.
The scent was heavy on their sense,
So hot, it seemed the living thing,
It made the blood within them sing;
Gusts of it made their hackles rise,
Hot gulps of it were agonies
Of joy, and thirst for blood and passion.
"Forrard!" cried Robin, "that's the fashion."
He raced beside his pack to cheer.

The field's noise died upon his ear,
A faint horn, far behind, blew thin
In cover, lest some hound were in.
Then instantly the great grass rise
Shut field and cover from his eyes,
He and his racers were alone.

"A dead fox or a broken bone."
Said Robin, peering for his prey.

* * * *

The rise, which shut the field away,
Showed him the vale's great map spread out,
The down's lean flank and thrusting snout,
Pale pastures, red-brown plough, dark wood,
Blue distance, still as solitude,
Glitter of water here and there,
The trees so delicately bare,
The dark green gorse and bright green holly.
"O glorious God," he said, "how jolly!"
And there downhill two fields ahead
The lolloping red dog-fox sped
Over Poor Pastures to the brook.
He grasped these things in one swift look,
Then dived into the bullfinch heart
Through thorns that ripped his sleeves apart
And skutched new blood upon his brow.
"His point's Lark's Leybourne Covers now,"
Said Robin, landing with a grunt.
"Forrard, my beautifuls!"

The hunt
Followed downhill to race with him,
White Rabbit, with his swallow's skim,
Drew within hail. "Quick burst, Sir Peter."
"A traveller. Nothing could be neater.
Making for Godsdown Clumps, I take it?"

"Lark's Leybourne, sir, if he can make it.
Forrard!"

Bill Ridden thundered down,
His big mouth grinned beneath his frown,
The hounds were going away from horses.
He saw the glint of watercourses,
Yell Brook and Wittold's Dyke, ahead,
His horseshoes sliced the green turf red.
Young Cothill's chaser rushed and past him,
Nob Manor, running next, said "Blast him!
The poet chap who thinks he rides."
Hugh Colway's mare made straking strides
Across the grass, the Colonel next,
Then Squire, volleying oaths, and vext,
Fighting his hunter for refusing;
Bell Ridden, like a cutter cruising,
Sailing the grass; then Cob on Warder,
Then Minton Price upon Marauder;
Ock Gurney with his eyes intense,
Burning as with a different sense,
His big mouth muttering glad "By damns!"
Then Pete, crouched down from head to hams,
Rapt like a saint, bright focussed flame;
Bennett, with devils in his wame,
Chewing black cud and spitting slanting;
Copse scattering jests and Stukely ranting;
Sal Ridden taking line from Dansey;

Long Robert forcing Necromancy;
A dozen more with bad beginnings;
Myngs riding hard to snatch an innings.
A wild last hound with high shrill yelps
Smacked forrard with some whipthong skelps.
Then last of all, at top of rise,
The crowd on foot, all gasps and eyes;
The run uphill had winded them.

* * * *

They saw the Yell Brook like a gem
Blue in the grass a short mile on;
They heard faint cries, but hounds were gone
A good eight fields and out of sight,
Except a rippled glimmer white
Going away with dying cheering,
And scarlet flappings disappearing,
And scattering horses going, going,
Going like mad, White Rabbit snowing
Far on ahead, a loose horse taking
Fence after fence with stirrups shaking,
And scarlet specks and dark specks dwindling.

* * * *

Nearer, were twigs knocked into kindling,
A much bashed fence still dropping stick,
Flung clods still quivering from the kick;
Cut hoof-marks pale in cheesy clay,
The horse-smell blowing clean away;

Birds flitting back into the cover.
One last faint cry, then all was over.
The hunt had been, and found, and gone.

* * * *

Selections from
ENSLAVED

All early in the April, when daylight comes
at five,
I went into the garden most glad to be alive;
The thrushes and the blackbirds were sing-
ing in the thorn,
The April flowers were singing for joy of
being born.

I smelt the dewy morning come blowing
through the woods
Where all the wilding cherries do toss their
snowy snoods;
I thought of the running water where sweet
white violets grow.
I said: "I'll pick them for her, because she
loves them so."

So in the dewy morning I turned to climb the
hill,
Beside the running water whose tongue is
never still.

Oh, delicate green and dewy were all the budding trees;
The blue dog-violets grew there, and many primroses.

Out of the wood I wandered, but paused upon the heath
To watch, beyond the tree-tops, the wrinkled sea beneath;
Its blueness and its stillness were trembling as it lay
In the old un-autumned beauty that never goes away.

And the beauty of the water brought my love into my mind,
Because all sweet love is beauty, and the loved thing turns to kind;
And I thought, "It is a beauty spread for setting of your grace,
O white violet of a woman with the April in your face."

So I gathered the white violets where young men pick them still,
And I turned to cross the woodland to her house beneath the hill,
And I thought of her delight in the flowers that I brought her,

Bright like sunlight, sweet like singing, cool
like running of the water.

* * * *

THE KHALIF'S JUDGMENT

They took us to a palace, to a chamber
Smelling of bruisèd spice and burning amber.
There slaves were sent to fetch the newly
risen
Servants and warders of the woman's prison.
The white of death was on them when they
came.

* * * *

The Khalif lightened on them with quick
flame.
Harsh though she was, I sorrowed for the
crone,
For she was old, a woman, and alone,
And came, in age, upon disgrace through me;
I know not what disgrace, I did not see
Those crones again, I doubt not they were
whipt
For letting us escape them while they slept.
Perhaps they killed the sentry. Who can
tell?
The devil ever keeps the laws in hell.

* * * *

They dragged them out to justice one by one.
However bitter was the justice done,
I doubt not they were thankful to be quit
(At cost of some few pangs) the fear of it.
Then our turn came.
The Khalif's fury raged
Because our eyes had seen those women caged,
Because our Christian presence had defiled
The Women's House, and somehow had beguiled
A woman-slave, his victim, out of it,
Against all Moorish law and Holy Writ.
If we had killed his son it had been less.

* * * *

He rose up in his place and rent his dress.
"Let them be ganched upon the hooks," he cried,
"Throughout to-day, but not till they have died.
Then gather all the slaves, and flay these three
Alive, before them, that the slaves may see
What comes to dogs who try to get away.
So, ganch the three."

* * * *

Then Gerard answered: "Stay.
Before you fling us to the hooks, hear this.

There are two laws, and men may go amiss
Either by breaking or by keeping one.
There is man's law by which man's work is done.
Your galleys rowèd, your palace kept in state,
Your victims ganched or headed on the gate,
And accident has bent us to its yoke.

* * * *

"We break it: death; but it is better broke.

* * * *

"You know, you Khalif, by what death you reign,
What force of fraud, what cruelty of pain,
What spies and prostitutes support your power,
And help your law to run its little hour:
We, who are but ourselves, defy it all.

* * * *

"We were free people till you made us thrall.
I was a sailor whom you took at sea
While sailing home. This woman that you see
You broke upon with murder in the night,
To drag her here to die for your delight.

This young man is her lover.
When he knew
That she was taken by your pirate crew,
He followed her to save her, or at least
Be near her in her grief. Man is a beast,
And women are his pasture by your law.
This young man was in safety, and he saw
His darling taken to the slave-girls' pen
Of weeping in the night and beasts of men.
He gave up everything, risked everything,
Came to your galley, took the iron ring,
Rowed at the bitter oar-loom as a slave,
Only for love of her, for hope to save
Her from one bruise of all the many bruises
That fall upon a woman when she loses
Those whom your gang of bloodhounds made
her lose.

* * * *

"Knowing another law, we could not choose
But stamp your law beneath our feet as dust,
Its bloodshed and its rapine and its lust,
For one clean hour of struggle to be free;
She for her passionate pride of chastity,
He for his love of her, and I because
I'm not too old to glory in the cause
Of generous souls who have harsh measure
meted.

* * * *

"We did the generous thing and are defeated.
Boast, then, to-night, when you have drunken deep,
Between the singing woman's song and sleep,
That you have tortured to the death three slaves
Who spat upon your law and found their graves
Helping each other in the generous thing.
No mighty triumph for a boast, O King."

* * * *

Then he was silent while the Khalif stared.
Never before had any being dared
To speak thus to him. All the courtiers paled.
We, who had died, expected to be haled
To torture there and then before the crowd.
It was so silent that the wind seemed loud
Clicking a loose slat in the open shutter.
I heard the distant breakers at their mutter
Upon the Mole, I saw my darling's face
Steady and proud; a breathing filled the place,
Men drawing breath until the Khalif spoke.

* * * *

His torn dress hung upon him like a cloak.
He spoke at last. "You speak of law," he said.
"By climates and by soils the laws are made.
Ours is a hawk-law suited to the land,
This rock of hawks or eyrie among sand;
I am a hawk, the hawk-law pleases me.

* * * *

"But I am man, and, being man, can be
Moved, sometimes, Christian, by the law which makes
Men who are suffering from man's mistakes
Brothers sometimes.
I had not heard this tale
Of you, the lover, following to jail
The woman whom you loved. You bowed your neck
Into the iron fettered to the deck,
And followed her to prison, all for love?

* * * *

"Allah, who gives men courage from above,
Has surely blessed you, boy.

* * * *

"And you, his queen;
Without your love his courage had not been.

Your beauty and your truth prevailed on
him.
Allah has blessed you, too.

* * * *

"And you, the grim
Killer of men at midnight, you who speak
To Kings as peers with colour in your cheek,
Allah made you a man who helps his friends.

* * * *

"God made you all. I will not thwart his
ends.
You shall be free.
Hear all. These folks are free.
You, Emir, fit a xebec for the sea
To let them sail at noon.
Go where you will.
And lest my rovers should molest you still,
Here is my seal that they shall let you pass."

* * * *

Throughout the room a sudden murmur was,
A gasp of indrawn breath and shifting feet.
So life was given back, the thing so sweet,
The undrunk cup that we were longing for.

* * * *

My darling spoke: "O Khalif, one gift more.
After this bounty that our hearts shall praise
At all our praying-times by nights and days,
I ask yet more, O raiser from the dead.
There in your woman's prison as we fled
A hopeless woman blessed us. It is said
That blessings from the broken truly bless.
Khalif, we would not leave in hopelessness
One whose great heart could bless us even
then,
Even as we left her in the prison pen.
She wished us fortune from a broken heart:
Let her come with us, Khalif, when we start."
"Go, you," the Khalif said, "and choose her
forth."

* * * *

At noon the wind was blowing to the north;
A swift felucca with a scarlet sail
Was ready for us, deep with many a bale
Of gold and spice and silk, the great King's
gifts.
The banners of the King were on her lifts.
The King and all his court rode down to see
Us four glad souls put seawards from Saffee.

* * * *

In the last glowing of the sunset's gold
We looked our last upon that pirate hold;

The palace gilding shone awhile like fire,
We were at sea with all our heart's desire,
Beauty and friendship and the dream fulfilled:
The golden answer to the deeply willed,
The purely longed-for, hardly tried-for thing.
Into the dark our sea-boat dipped her wing;
Polaris climbed out of the dark and shone,
Then came the moon, and now Saffee was gone,
With all hell's darkness hidden by the sea.

* * * *

Oh, beautiful is love, and to be free
Is beautiful, and beautiful are friends.
Love, freedom, comrades, surely make amends
For all these thorns through which we walk to death!
God let us breathe your beauty with our breath.

* * * *

All early in the Maytime, when daylight comes at four,
We blessed the hawthorn blossom that welcomed us ashore.

Oh, beautiful in this living that passes like
the foam,
It is to go with sorrow, yet come with beauty
home!

* * * *

THE HOUNDS OF HELL

About the crowing of the cock,
When the shepherds feel the cold,
A horse's hoofs went clip-a-clock
Along the hangman's wold.

The horse-hoofs trotted on the stone,
The hoof-sparks glittered by,
And then a hunting horn was blown
And hounds broke into cry.

There was a strangeness in the horn,
A wildness in the cry,
A power of devilry forlorn
Exulting bloodily.

A power of night that ran a prey
Along the hangman's hill.
The shepherds heard the spent buck bray
And the horn blow for the kill.

They heard the worrying of the hounds
About the dead beast's bones;

Then came the horn, and then the sounds
  Of horse-hoofs treading stones.

"What hounds are these that hunt the
    night?"
  The shepherds asked in fear.
"Look, there are calkins clinking bright;
  They must be coming here."

The calkins clinkered to a spark,
  The hunter called the pack;
The sheep-dogs' fells all bristled stark
  And all their lips went back.

"Lord God!" the shepherds said, "they come;
  And see what hounds he has:
All dripping bluish fire, and dumb,
  And nosing to the grass,

"And trotting scatheless through the gorse,
  And bristling in the fell.
Lord, it is Death upon the horse,
  And they're the hounds of hell!"

They shook to watch them as they sped,
  All black against the sky;
A horseman with a hooded head
  And great hounds padding by.

When daylight drove away the dark
  And larks went up and thrilled,

The shepherds climbed the wold to mark
  What beast the hounds had killed.

They came to where the hounds had fed,
  And in that trampled place
They found a pedlar lying dead,
  With horror in his face.

* * * *

There was a farmer on the wold
  Where all the brooks begin,
He had a thousand sheep from fold
  Out grazing on the whin.

The next night, as he lay in bed,
  He heard a canterer come
Trampling the wold-top with a tread
  That sounded like a drum.

He thought it was a post that rode,
  So turned him to his sleep;
But the canterer in his dream abode
  Like horse-hoofs running sheep.

And in his dreams a horn was blown
  And feathering hounds replied,
And all his wethers stood like stone
  In rank on the hillside.

Then, while he struggled still with dreams,
  He saw his wethers run

Before a pack cheered on with screams,
The thousand sheep as one.

So, leaping from his bed in fear,
He flung the window back,
And he heard a death-horn blowing clear
And the crying of a pack,

And the thundering of a thousand sheep,
All mad and running wild
To the stone-pit seven fathoms deep,
Whence all the town is tiled.

After them came the hounds of hell,
With hell's own fury filled;
Into the pit the wethers fell,
And all but three were killed.

The hunter blew his horn a note
And laughed against the moon;
The farmer's breath caught in his throat,
He fell into a swoon.

* * * *

The next night when the watch was set
A heavy rain came down,
The leaden gutters dripped with wet
Into the shuttered town.

So close the shutters were, the chink
Of lamplight scarcely showed;

The men at fireside heard no clink
  Of horse-hoofs on the road.

They heard the creaking hinge complain,
  And the mouse that gnawed the floor,
And the limping footsteps of the rain
  On the stone outside the door.

And on the wold the rain came down
  Till trickles streakt the grass:
A traveller riding to the town
  Drew rein to let it pass.

The wind sighed in the fir-tree tops,
  The trickles sobb'd in the grass,
The branches ran with showers of drops:
  No other noise there was.

Till up the wold the traveller heard
  A horn blow faint and thin;
He thought it was the curlew bird
  Lamenting to the whin;

And when the far horn blew again,
  He thought an owl hallooed,
Or a rabbit gave a shriek of pain
  As the stoat leapt in the wood.

But when the horn blew next, it blew
  A trump that split the air,

And hounds gave cry to an Halloo!
  The hunt of hell was there.

"Black" (said the traveller), "black and
    swift.
  Those running devils came;
Scoring to cry with hackles stifft,
  And grin-jowls dropping flame."

They settled to the sightless scent,
  And up the hill a cry
Told where the frightened quarry went,
  Well knowing it would die.

Then presently a cry rang out,
  And a mort blew for the kill;
A shepherd with his throat torn out
  Lay dead upon the hill.

* * * *

When this was known, the shepherds drove
  Their flocks into the town;
No man, for money or for love,
  Would watch them on the down.

But night by night the terror ran,
  The townsmen heard them still;
Nightly the hell-hounds hunted man
  And the hunter whooped the kill.

The men who lived upon the moor
  Would waken to the scratch
Of hounds' claws digging at the door
  Or scraping at the latch.

And presently no man would go
  Without doors after dark,
Lest hell's black hunting horn should blow,
  And hell's black bloodhounds mark.

They shivered round the fire at home,
  While out upon the bent
The hounds with black jowls dropping foam
  Went nosing to the scent.

Men let the hay crop run to seed
  And the corn crop sprout in ear,
And the root crop choke itself in weed,
  That hell-hound hunting year.

Empty to heaven lay the wold,
  Village and church grew green;
The courtyard flagstones spread with mould,
  And weeds sprang up between.

And sometimes when the cock had crowed,
  And the hillside stood out grey,
Men saw them slinking up the road
  All sullen from their prey.

A hooded horseman on a black,
With nine black hounds at heel,
After the hell-hunt going back
All bloody from their meal.

And in men's minds a fear began
That hell had over-hurled
The guardians of the soul of man,
And come to rule the world.

With bitterness of heart by day,
And terror in the night,
And the blindness of a barren way
And withering of delight.

* * * *

St. Withiel lived upon the moor,
Where the peat-men live in holes;
He worked among the peat-men poor,
Who only have their souls.

He brought them nothing but his love
And the will to do them good,
But power filled him from above.
His very touch was food.

Men told St. Withiel of the hounds,
And how they killed their prey.
He thought them far beyond his bounds,
So many miles away.

Then one whose son the hounds had killed
  Told him the tale at length;
St. Withiel pondered why God willed
  That hell should have such strength.

Then one, a passing traveller, told
  How since the hounds had come,
The church was empty on the wold,
  And all the priests were dumb.

St. Withiel rose at this, and said:
  "This priest will not be dumb;
My spirit will not be afraid
  Though all hell's devils come."

He took his stick and out he went,
  The long way to the wold,
Where the sheep-bells clink upon the bent
  And every wind is cold.

He passed the rivers running red
  And the mountains standing bare;
At last the wold-land lay ahead,
  Un-yellowed by the share.

All in the brown October time
  He clambered to the weald;
The plum lay purpled into slime,
  The harvest lay in field.

Trampled by many-footed rain
The sunburnt corn lay dead;
The myriad finches in the grain
Rose bothering at his tread.

The myriad finches took a sheer
And settled back to food:
A man was not a thing to fear
In such a solitude.

The hurrying of their wings died out,
A silence took the hill;
There was no dog, no bell, no shout,
The windmill's sails were still.

The gate swung creaking on its hasp,
The pear splashed from the tree,
In the rotting apple's heart the wasp
Was drunken drowsily.

The grass upon the cart-wheel ruts
Had made the trackways dim;
The rabbits ate and hopped their scuts,
They had no fear of him.

The sunset reddened in the west;
The distant depth of blue
Stretched out and dimmed; to twiggy nest
The rooks in clamour drew.

The oakwood in his mail of brass
  Bowed his great crest and stood;
The pine-tree saw St. Withiel pass,
  His great bole blushed like blood.

Then tree and wood alike were dim,
  Yet still St. Withiel strode;
The only noise to comfort him
  Were his footsteps on the road.

The crimson in the west was smoked,
  The west wind heaped the wrack,
Each tree seemed like a murderer cloaked
  To stab him in the back.

Darkness and desolation came
  To dog his footsteps there;
The dead leaves rustling called his name,
  The death-moth brushed his hair.

The murmurings of the wind fell still;
  He stood and stared around:
He was alone upon the hill,
  On devil-haunted ground.

What was the whitish thing which stood
  In front, with one arm raised,
Like death a-grinning in a hood?
  The saint stood still and gazed.

"What are you?" said St. **Withiel.** "Speak!"
Not any answer came
But the night-wind making darkness bleak,
And the leaves that called his name.

A glow shone on the whitish thing,
It neither stirred nor spoke:
In spite of faith, a shuddering
Made the good saint to choke.

He struck the whiteness with his staff—
It was a withered tree;
An owl flew from it with a laugh,
The darkness shook with glee.

The darkness came all round him close
And cackled in his ear;
The midnight, full of life none knows,
Was very full of fear.

The darkness cackled in his heart
That things of hell were there,
That the startled rabbit played a part
And the stoat's leap did prepare—

Prepare the stage for night of blood,
And the mind of night for death,
For a spirit trembling in the mud
In an agony for breath.

A terror came upon the saint,
  It stripped his spirit bare;
He was sick body standing faint,
  Cold sweat and stiffened hair.

He took his terror by the throat
  And stamped it underfoot;
Then, far away, the death-horn's note
  Quailed like a screech-owl's hoot.

Still far away that devil's horn
  Its quavering death-note blew,
But the saint could hear the crackling thorn
  That the hounds trod as they drew.

"Lord, it is true," St. Withiel moaned,
  "And the hunt is drawing near!
Devils that Paradise disowned,
  They know that I am here.

"And there, O God, a hound gives tongue,
  And great hounds quarter dim"—
The saint's hands to his body clung,
  He knew they came for him.

Then close at hand the horn was loud,
  Like Peter's cock of old,
For joy that Peter's soul was cowed,
  And Jesus' body sold.

Then terribly the hounds in cry
  Gave answer to the horn;
The saint in terror turned to fly
  Before his flesh was torn.

After his body came the hounds,
  After the hounds the horse;
Their running crackled with the sounds
  Of fire that runs in gorse.

The saint's breath failed, but still they came:
  The hunter cheered them on,
Even as a wind that blows a flame
  In the vigil of St. John.

And as St. Withiel's terror grew,
  The crying of the pack
Bayed nearer, as though terror drew
  Those grip teeth to his back.

No hope was in his soul, no stay,
  Nothing but screaming will
To save his terror-stricken clay
  Before the hounds could kill.

The laid corn tripped, the bramble caught,
  He stumbled on the stones;
The thorn that scratched him, to his thought,
  Was hell's teeth at his bones.

His legs seemed bound as in a dream,
  The wet earth held his feet,
He screamed aloud as rabbits scream
  Before the stoat's teeth meet.

A black thing struck him on the brow,
  A blackness loomed and waved;
It was a tree—he caught a bough
  And scrambled up it, saved.

Saved for the moment, as he thought,
  He pressed against the bark:
The hell-hounds missed the thing they sought,
  They quartered in the dark.

They panted underneath the tree,
  They quartered to the call;
The hunter cried: "Yoi doit, go see!"
  His death-horn blew a fall.

Now up, now down, the hell-hounds went
  With soft feet padding wide;
They tried, but could not hit the scent,
  However hard they tried.

Then presently the horn was blown,
  The hounds were called away;
The hoof-beats glittered on the stone
  And trotted on the brae.

* * * *

The saint gat strength, but with it came
A horror of his fear,
Anguish at having failed, and shame,
And sense of judgment near:

Anguish at having left his charge
And having failed his trust,
At having flung his sword and targe
To save his body's dust.

He clambered down the saving tree.
"I am unclean!" he cried.
"Christ died upon a tree for me,
I used a tree to hide.

"The hell-hounds bayed about the cross,
And tore his clothes apart;
But Christ was gold, and I am dross,
And mud is in my heart."

He stood in anguish in the field;
A little wind blew by,
The dead leaves dropped, the great stars wheeled
Their squadrons in the sky.

* * * *

"Lord, I will try again," he said,
"Though all hell's devils tear.
This time I will not be afraid,
And what is sent I'll dare."

He set his face against the slope
  Until he topped the brae;
Courage had healed his fear, and hope
  Had put his shame away.

And then, far-off, a quest-note ran,
  A feathering hound replied:
The hounds still drew the night for man
  Along that countryside.

Then one by one the hell-hounds spoke,
  And still the horn made cheer;
Then the full devil-chorus woke
  To fill the saint with fear.

He knew that they were after him
  To hunt him till he fell;
He turned and fled into the dim,
  And after him came hell.

Over the stony wold he went,
  Through thorns and over quags;
The bloodhounds cried upon the scent,
  They ran like rutting stags.

And when the saint looked round, he saw
  Red eyes intently strained,
The bright teeth in the grinning jaw,
  And running shapes that gained.

Uphill, downhill, with failing breath,
  He ran to save his skin,
Like one who knocked the door of death,
  Yet dared not enter in.

Then water gurgled in the night,
  Dark water lay in front,
The saint saw bubbles running bright;
  The huntsman cheered his hunt.

The saint leaped far into the stream
  And struggled to the shore.
The hunt died like an evil dream,
  A strange land lay before.

He waded to a glittering land,
  With brighter light than ours;
The water ran on silver sand
  By yellow water-flowers.

The fishes nosed the stream to rings
  As petals floated by,
The apples were like orbs of kings
  Against a glow of sky.

On cool and steady stalks of green
  The outland flowers grew.
The ghost-flower, silver like a queen,
  The queen-flower streakt with blue.

The king-flower, crimson on his stalk,
With frettings in his crown;
The peace-flower, purple, from the chalk,
The flower that loves the down.

Lilies like thoughts, roses like words,
In the sweet brain of June;
The bees there, like the stock-dove birds,
Breathed all the air with croon.

Purple and golden hung the plums;
Like slaves bowed down with gems
The peach-trees were; sweet-scented gums
Oozed clammy from their stems.

And birds of every land were there,
Like flowers that sang and flew;
All beauty that makes singing fair
That sunny garden knew.

For all together sang with throats
So tuned, that the intense
Colour and odour pearled the notes
And passed into the sense.

And as the saint drew near, he heard
The birds talk, each to each,
The fire-bird to the glory-bird.
He understood their speech.

One said: "The saint was terrified
  Because the hunters came."
Another said: "The bloodhounds cried,
  And all their eyes were flame."

Another said: "No shame to him,
  For mortal men are blind:
They cannot see beyond the grim
  Into the peace behind."

Another sang: "They cannot know,
  Unless we give the clue,
The power that waits in them below
  The things they are and do."

Another sang: "They never guess
  That deep within them stand
Courage and peace and loveliness,
  Wisdom and skill of hand."

Another said: "Sing, brothers! come,
  Make beauty in the air!
The saint is shamed with martyrdom
  Beyond his strength to bear.

"Sing, brothers! every bird that flies!"
  They stretcht their throats to sing,
With the sweetness known in Paradise
  When the bells of heaven ring.

"Open the doors, good saint!" they cried,
  Pass deeper to your soul;
There is a spirit in your side
  That hell cannot control.

"Open the doors to let him in,
  That beauty with the sword;
The hounds are silly shapes of sin,
  That shrivel at a word.

"Come, saint!" and as they sang, the air
  Shone with the shapes of flame,
Bird after bright bird glittered there,
  Crying aloud they came.

A rush of brightness and delight,
  White as the snow in drift,
The fire-bird and the glory-bright,
  Most beautiful, most swift.

Sweeping aloft to show the way,
  And singing as they flew,
Many and glittering as the spray
  When windy seas are blue.

So cheerily they rushed, so strong
  Their sweep was through the flowers,
The saint was swept into their song
  And gloried in their powers.

He sang, and leaped into the stream,
And struggled to the shore;
The garden faded like a dream,
A darkness lay before.

Darkness with glimmery light forlorn
And quavering hounds in quest,
A huntsman blowing on a horn,
And lost things not at rest.

He saw the huntsman's hood show black
Against the greying east;
He heard him hollo to the pack
And horn them to the feast.

He heard the bloodhounds come to cry
And settle to the scent;
The black horse made the hoof-casts fly,
The sparks flashed up the bent.

The saint stood still until they came
Baying to ring him round:
A horse whose flecking foam was flame,
And hound on yelling hound.

And jaws that dripped with bitter fire
Snarled at the saint to tear.
Pilled hell-hounds, balder than the geier,
Leaped round him everywhere.

St. Whithiel let the hell-hounds rave.
He cried: "Now, in this place,
Climb down, you huntsman of the grave.
And let me see your face.

"Climb down, you huntsman out of hell,
And show me what you are.
The judge has stricken on the bell,
Now answer at the bar."

The baying of the hounds fell still,
Their jaws' salt fire died.
The wind of morning struck in chill
Along that countryside.

The blackness of the horse was shrunk,
His sides seemed ribbed and old.
The rider, hooded like a monk,
Was trembling with the cold.

The rider bowed as though with pain;
Then clambered down and stood,
The thin thing that the frightened brain
Had fed with living blood.

"Show me. What are you?" said the saint.
A hollow murmur spoke.
"This, Lord," it said; a hand moved faint
And drew aside the cloak.

A Woman Death that palsy shook
  Stood sick and dwindling there;
Her fingers were a bony crook,
  And blood was on her hair.

"Stretch out your hands and sign the Cross,"
  Was all St. Withiel said.
The bloodhounds moaned upon the moss,
  The Woman Death obeyed.

Whimpering with pain, she made the sign.
  "Go, devilhag," said he,
"Beyond all help of bread and wine,
  Beyond all land and sea,

"Into the ice, into the snow,
  Where Death himself is stark!
Out, with your hounds about you, go,
  And perish in the dark!"

They dwindled as the mist that fades
  At coming of the sun;
Like rags of stuff that fire abrades
  They withered and were done.

The cock, that scares the ghost from earth,
  Crowed as they dwindled down;
The red sun, happy in his girth,
  Strode up above the town.

Sweetly above the sunny wold
The bells of churches rang;
The sheep-bells clinked within the fold,
And the larks went up and sang;

Sang for the setting free of men
From devils that destroyed;
The lark, the robin, and the wren,
They joyed and overjoyed.

The chats that harbour in the whin,
Their little sweet throats swelled,
The blackbird and the thrush joined in,
The missel-thrush excelled.

Till round the saint the singing made
A beauty in the air,
An ecstasy that cannot fade
But is for ever there.

ANIMULA

This is the place, this house beside the sea;
This was the setting where they played their parts.
Two men, who knew them all, have talked to me:
Beauty she had, and all had passionate hearts.

I write this in the window where she sat.
Two fields, all green with summer, lie below;
Then the grey sea, at thought, cloud-coloured, flat,
Wind-dappled from the glen, the tide at flow.
Her portrait and her husband's hang together
One on each side the fire; it is close;
The tree-tops toss, it is a change of weather.
They were most lovely and unhappy, those,
That married pair and he who loved too well;
This was the door by which they entered hell.

This is a drawing of her as a child,
This is she wed; the faces are the same,
Only the beauty of the babe is wild,
The woman's beauty has been broken tame.
Witty, bright, gentle, earnest, with great eyes,
Dark hair in heaps, pure colour, lips that smile;
Beauty that is more wisdom than the wise
Lived in this woman for a little while.
Dressed in that beauty that our mothers wore
(So touching now), she looks out of the frame
With stag-like eyes, that wept till they were sore
Many's the time, till she was broken tame.
Witty, bright, gentle, earnest, even so,
Destiny calls and spirits come and go.

This is her husband in his youth; and this
Is he in manhood; this is he in age.
There is a devil in those eyes of his,
A glittering devil, restless in his cage.
A grand man, with a beauty and a pride,
A manner and a power and a fire,
With beaks of vultures eating at his side,
The great brain mad with unfulfilled desire.
"With grand ideas," they say; tall, wicked, proud,
Cold, cruel, bitter, clever, dainty, skilled;
Splendid to see, a head above the crowd;
Splendid with every strength, yet unfulfilled.
Cutting himself (and all those near) with hate
From that sharp mind which should have shaped a state.

And many years ago I saw the third
Bowed in old age and mad with misery;
Mad with the bright eyes of the eagle-bird,
Burning his heart at fires of memory.
He stood behind a chair, and bent and muttered;
Grand still, grey, sunburnt, bright with mad eyes brown,
Burning, though dying, like a torch that guttered,

That once had lit Queen Helen through the town.
I only saw him once: I saw him go
Leaning uphill his body to the rain,
Too good a man for life to punish so,
Theirs were the pride and passion, his the pain.
His old coat flapped; the little children turned
To see him pass, that passionate age that burned.

"I knew them well, all three," the old man said;
"He was an unused force, and she a child.
She caught him with her beauty, being a maid.
The thought that she had trapped him drove him wild.
He would not work with others, could not rest,
And nothing here could use him or engage him;
Yet here he stayed, with devils in his breast,
To blast the woman who had dared to cage him.
Then, when the scholar came, it made the three:
She turned to him, and he, he turned to her.

Thy were both saints: elopement could not
be;
So here they stayed, and passion plied the
spur.
Then the men fought, and later she was
found
In that green pool beyond the headland,
drowned.

"They carried her drowned body up the grass
Here to the house; they laid it on the bed
(This very bed, where I have slept, it was).
The scholar begged to see her, being dead.
The husband walked downstairs, to see him
there
Begging to see her as one asks an alms.
He spat at him and cut his cheek-bone bare.
'There's pay,' he said, 'my poet, for your
psalms.'
And then they fought together at the door,
Biting each other, like two dogs, while she
Lay dead, poor woman, dripping on the floor
Out of her hair the death-drops of the sea.
Later, they fought whenever they might meet,
In church, or in the fields, or in the street."

Up on the hill another aged man
Remembered them. He said: "They were
afraid;
They feared to end the passions they began.

They held the cards, and yet they never played.
He should have broken from her at all cost;
She should have loved her lover and gone free.
They all held winning cards, and yet they lost;
So two were wrecked and one drowned in the sea.
Some harshness or some law, or else some fear
Stifled their souls; God help us! when we know
Certainly, certain things, the way is clear.
And yet they paid, and one respects them so.
Perhaps they were too fine. I know not, I.
Men must have mercy, being ripe to die."

So this old house of mourning was the stage
(This house and those green fields) for all that woe.
There are her books, her writing on the page;
In those choked beds she made the flowers grow.
Most desolate it is, the rain is pouring,
The trees all toss and drip and scatter evil,
The floods are out, the waterfall is roaring,
The bar is mad with many a leaping devil.
And in this house the wind goes whining wild,

The door blows open, till I think to see
That delicate sweet woman, like a child,
Standing with great dark stag's eyes watching me;
Watching as though her sorrow might make plain
(Had I but wit) the meaning of such pain.

I wonder if she sang in this old room.
Ah, never! No; they tell me that she stood
For hours together staring into gloom
Out of the prison bars of flesh and blood.
So, when the ninth wave drowned her, haply she
Wakened, with merging senses, till she blent
Into the joy and colour of the sea,
One with the purpose of the element.
And there, perhaps, she cannot feel the woe
Passed in this rotting house, but runs like light
Over the billows where the clippers go,
One with the blue sea's pureness of delight;
Laughing, perhaps, at that old woe of hers
Chained in the cage with fellow-prisoners.

He died in that lone cottage near the sea.
In the grey morning when the tide was turning,
The wards of life slipt back and set him free

From cares of meat and dress, from joys and yearning.
Then like an old man gathering strength, he strayed
Over the beach, and strength came into him,
Beauty that never threatened nor betrayed
Made bright the eyes that sorrow had made dim;
So that upon that stretch of barren sand
He knew his dreams; he saw her beauty run
With Sorrowful Beauty, laughing, hand in hand;
He heard the trumpets blow in Avalon.
He saw the golden statue stretching down
The wreath, for him, of roses, in a crown.

They say that as her husband lay a-dying
He clamoured for a chain to beat the hound.
They say that all the garden rang with crying
That came out of the air, out of the ground,
Out of the waste that was his soul, maybe,
Out of the running wolf-hound of his soul,
That had been kennelled in and now broke free
Out to the moors where stags go, past control.
All through his life his will had kennelled him;
Now he was free, and with a hackling fell
He snarled out of the body to the dim,

To run the spirits with the hounds of hell;
To run forever at the quarry gone,
The uncaught thing a little further on.

So, one by one, Time took them to his keeping,
Those broken lanterns that had held his fire;
Dust went to dust, and flesh had time for sleeping,
And soul the stag escaped the hound desire.
And now, perhaps, the memory of their hate
Has passed from them, and they are friends again,
Laughing at all the trouble of this state
Where men and women work each other pain.
And in the wind that runs along the glen
Beating at cottage doors, they may go by,
Exulting now, and helping sorrowing men
To do some little good before they die.
For from these ploughed-up souls the spirit brings
Harvest at last, and sweet from bitter things.

FORGET

Forget all these, the barren fool in power,
The madman in command, the jealous O,
The bitter world biting its bitter hour,
The cruel now, the happy long ago.

Forget all these, for, though they truly hurt,
Even to the soul, they are not lasting things:
Men are no gods; we tread the city dirt,
But in our souls we can be queens and kings.

And I, O Beauty, O divine white wonder,
On whom my dull eyes, blind to all else, peer,
Have you for peace, that not the whole war's thunder,
Nor the world's wreck, can threat or take from here.

So you remain, though all man's passionate seas
Roar their blind tides, I can forget all these.

ON GROWING OLD

Be with me, Beauty, for the fire is dying;
My dog and I are old, too old for roving.
Man, whose young passion sets the spindrift flying,
Is soon too lame to march, too cold for loving.
I take the book and gather to the fire,
Turning old yellow leaves; minute by minute
The clock ticks to my heart. A withered wire,

Moves a thin ghost of music in the spinet.
I cannot sail your seas, I cannot wander
Your cornland, nor your hill-land, nor your valleys
Ever again, nor share the battle yonder
Where the young knight the broken squadron rallies.
Only stay quiet while my mind remembers
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.
Beauty, have pity! for the strong have power,
The rich their wealth, the beautiful their grace,
Summer of man its sunlight and its flower,
Spring-time of man all April in a face.
Only, as in the jostling in the Strand,
Where the mob thrusts or loiters or is loud,
The beggar with the saucer in his hand
Asks only a penny from the passing crowd,
So, from this glittering world with all its fashion,
Its fire, and play of men, its stir, its march,
Let me have wisdom, Beauty, wisdom and passion,
Bread to the soul, rain where the summers parch.
Give me but these, and, though the darkness close,
Even the night will blossom as the rose.

Selections from

RIGHT ROYAL

As a whirl of notes running in a fugue that men play,
And the thundering follows as the pipe flits away,
And the laughter comes after and the haut-boys begin,
So they ran at the hurdle and scattered the whin.
As they leaped to the race-course the sun burst from cloud,
And like tumult in dream came the roar of the crowd.

For to right and to left, now, were crowded men yelling,
And a great cry boomed backward like muffled bells knelling,
And a surge of men running seemed to follow the race,
The horses all trembled and quickened their pace.

As the porpoise, grown weary of his rush through the dim
Of the unlitten silence where the swiftnesses swim,

Learns at sudden the tumult of a clipper
bound home
And exults with this playmate and leaps in
her foam,

Or as nightingales coming into England in
May,
Coming songless at sunset, being worn with
the way,
Settle spent in the twilight, drooping head
under wing,
Yet are glad when the dark comes, while at
moonrise they sing;

Or as fire on a hillside, by happy boys kindled,
That has burnt black a heath-tuft, scorcht a
bramble, and dwindled,
Blown by wind yet arises in a wave of flogged
flame,
So the souls of those horses to the testing
time came.

Now they closed on their leaders, and the
running increased,
They rushed down the arc curving round to
the east;
All the air rang with roaring, all the peopled
loud stands
Roared aloud from tense faces, shook with
hats and waved hands.

So they cleared the green gorse-bush by bursting it through,
There was no time for thinking, there was scarce time to do.
Charles gritted his spirit as he charged through the gorse:
"You must just grin and suffer; sit still on your horse."

There in front was a hurdle and the Distance Post white,
And the long, green, broad Straight washed with wind and blown bright;
Now the roaring had screaming, bringing names to their ears:
"Come, Soyland!" "Sir Lopez!" Then cat-calls; then cheers.

"Sir Lopez! Sir Lopez!" then the jigging brass laughter
From the yellow toss't swing-boats swooping rafter to rafter.
Then the blare of all organs, then the roar of all throats,
And they shot past the side shows, the horses and boats.

Now the Wants of the Watchers whirled into the race
Like flames in their fury, like men in the face,

Mad-red from the wanting that made them alive,
They fought with those horses or helped them to strive.

Like leaves blown on Hudson when maples turn gold,
They whirled in their colour, they clutched to catch hold,
They sang to the riders, they smote at their hearts
Like flakes of live fire, like castings of darts.

As a snow in Wisconsin when the darkness comes down,
Running white on the prairie, making all the air brown,
Blinding men with the hurry of its millions of feet,
So the Wants pelted on them, so they blinded and beat.

And like spirits calm shining upon horses of flame,
Came the Friends of those riders to shield them from shame,
White as fire white-burning, rushing each by his friend,
Singing songs of the glory of the world without end;

And as men in Wisconsin driving cars in the snow
Butt against its impulsion and face to the blow,
Tossing snow from their bonnets as a ship tosses foam,
So the Friend tossed the Wantings as they brought their friends home.

Now they charged the last hurdle that led to the Straight,
Charles longing to ride, though his spirit said "Wait."
He came to his horses as they came to the leap,
Eight hard-driven horses, eight men breathing deep.

On the left, as he leaped it, a flashing of brown
Kicking white on the grass, showed that Thankful was down;
Then a glance, right and left, showed that, barring all flukes,
It was Soyland's, Sir Lopez', or Peterkinooks'.

He passed the Red Ember, he came to the flank
Of Peterkinooks, whom he reached and then sank.

There were only two others, going level alone,
First the spotted cream jacket, then the blue, white and roan.

Up the street of green race-course they strained for the prize,
While the stands blurred with waving and the air shook with cries:
"Now, Sir Lopez!" "Come, Soyland!" "Now, Sir Lopez! Now, now!"
Then Charles judged his second, but he could not tell how.

But a glory of sureness leaped from horse into man,
And the man said, "Now, beauty," and the horse said, "I can."
And the long weary Royal made an effort the more,
Though his heart thumped like drum-beats as he went to the fore.

Neck and neck went Sir Lopez and Soyland together,
Soyland first, a short head, with his neck all in lather;
Both were ridden their hardest, both were doing their best,
Right Royal reached Soyland and came to his chest.

There Soyland's man saw him with the heel of his eye,
A horse with an effort that could beat him or tie;
Then he glanced at Sir Lopez, and he bit through his lip,
And he drove in his spurs and he took up his whip.

There he lashed the game Soyland who had given his all,
And he gave three strides more, and then failed at the call,
And he dropped behind Royal like a leaf in a tide:
Then Sir Lopez and Royal ran on side by side.

There they looked at each other, and they rode, and were grim;
Charles thought, "That's Sir Lopez. I shall never beat him."
All the yells for Sir Lopez seemed to darken the air,
They were rushing past Emmy and the White Post was there.

He drew to Sir Lopez; but Sir Lopez drew clear;
Right Royal clung to him and crept to his ear.

Then the man on Sir Lopez judged the moment had come
For the last ounce of effort that would bring his horse home.

So he picked up his whip for three swift slashing blows,
And Sir Lopez drew clear, but Right Royal stuck close,
Then he gained, past his withers, past his neck to his head.
With Sir Lopez' man lashing, Charles still, seeing red.

So they rushed for one second, then Sir Lopez shot out:
Charles thought, 'There, he's done me, without any doubt.
Oh, come now, Right Royal!"
And Sir Lopez changed feet
And his ears went back level; Sir Lopez was beat.

Right Royal went past him, half an inch, half a head,
Half a neck, he was leading, for an instant he led;
Then a hooped black and coral flew up like a shot,
With a lightning-like effort from little Gavotte.

The little bright mare, made of nerves and steel springs,
Shot level beside him, shot ahead as with wings.
Charles felt his horse quicken, felt the desperate beat
Of the blood in his body from his knees to his feet.

Three terrible strides brought him up to the mare,
Then they rushed to wild shouting through a whirl of blow air;
Then Gavotte died to nothing; Soyland came once again
Till his muzzle just reached to the knot on his rein.

Then a whirl of urged horses thundered up, whipped and blown,
Soyland, Peterkinooks, and Red Ember the roan.
For an instant they challenged, then they drooped and were done;
Then the White Post shot backwards, Right Royal had won.

Won a half length from Soyland, Red Ember close third;
Fourth, Peterkinooks; fifth, Gavotte, harshly spurred;

Sixth, Sir Lopez, whose rider said, "Just at the Straight
He swerved at the hurdle and twisted a plate."

Then the numbers went up; then John Harding appeared
To lead in the Winner while the bookmakers cheered.
Then the riders weighed-in, and the meeting was over,
And bright Emy Crowthorne could go with her lover.

Charles married his lady, but he rode no more races;
He lives on the Downland on the blown grassy places,
Where he and Right Royal can canter for hours
On the flock-bitten turf full of tiny blue flowers.

There the Roman pitcht camp, there the Saxon kept sheep,
There he lives out his Living that no man can keep,
That is manful but a moment before it must pass,
Like the stars sweeping westward, like the wind on the grass.

Selections from

ESTHER

CHORUS.

In the troubled dreams a slave has, ere I waken
I can see my city shining as of old,
Roof and column of the Temple wreathed in gold;
And the ramparts proud as erst, before the town was taken,
And the well-loved living shapes that now are cold.
Then I wake, a slave, and houseless and forsaken,
Chained, an outcast, and a chattel, bought and sold.

Now, for us, no future but the corn-mill and the stranger
In the foeman's house for ever.
And the cold eyes of a master and the cruel eyes of danger,
And the memory of joys returning never.

We who once were dainty ones and splendid,
Now are slaves who grind the mill beneath a master's blows;

Would that when our fathers ended, we had ended,
That we lay in Zion's soil, at peace with those.

ALL.

O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

Here, from our prison gate, we see again
The never-ending sand, the Persian plain,
The long, long road, the stones that we should tread
Were we but free, to our beloved dead.
And in the Spring the birds fly to the west
Over these deserts that the mountains hem,
They fly to our dear land; they fly to nest;
We cannot go with them.

And in Springtime from the windows of the tower
I can see the wild horses in the plain,
Treading stately but so lightly that they never break the flower,
And they fade at speed to westward and they never come again.

And in Springtime at the quays the men of Tyre
Set their ships towards the west and hoist their sail,

And our hearts cry "Take us with you to the land of our desire!"
And they hear our cry but will not take the crier:
The crying of a slave can be of no avail.

Birds, horses, sailors, all are free to go
To seek their homes beyond the wilderness:
But we, the homeless, only know
Weariful days of wearing-out distress.

O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

Shall we be ever exiled, must it be
That we must pass our days as slaves for ever?
Far from our pleasant land, and never see
Our sacred Hills and Jordan's blessed river?

Shall we not see again thy ramparts rise,
O Zion, and thy splendid towers rebuilt,
And God's great Temple set for sacrifice
By this our race, atoning for our guilt?
Or must our weary footsteps no more tread
The land we love, where those we loved are dead?
No, we shall see that lovely land no more,
Nor anything we loved there, place or friend,

Nor do, nor know, the things we hungered for.
Like darts out of God's Hand our deaths descend
To make an end.

Now we can crouch and pray and count the hours
Until our murderers' feet are on the stair,
And bright steel spirts the blood upon our hair
And lays us motionless among the flowers,
White things that do not care.

And afterwards, who knows what moths we'll be
Flying about the lamps of life at night
In death's great darkness, blindly, blunderingly?

The brook that sings in the grass knows more delight,
The ox that the men pole-axe has more peace
Than prisoners' souls; but now there comes release;
We shall go home, to death, to-morrow night.
O lamentation, misery, woe, woe!

CURTAIN.

ACT II

[AHASUERUS *on his couch.*]

AHASUERUS.

What is the time? I hear the water drip
Telling the time; and all the Court is still,
Still as the midnight; not a footstep stirs
Save the slow sentry on the palace wall.
No glow of light is in the eastern heaven;
The barren, dwindled moon her ruddy horn
Heaves o'er the tree-tops; it is midnight, sure.
I see Orion falling, and the Dog
Bright at his heels. Deep midnight. Not a sound
Save the most patient mouse that gnaws the wainscot.

[*He rises and walks.*]

O weary Time, I cannot sleep to-night.
All still, all sleep, save only I the King.
And that great city at the palace foot
Lies sleeping; yet a strange fear troubles me
That some there do not sleep, but prepare evil;
Evil against myself, against the King.
Those foreigners whom Haman told me of,
The Jews, who are to die, as Haman urged.
Excellent Haman, guardian of my throne.
It may be that this warning comes too late.

What if those Jews be coming even now
By the black alleys of that sleeping city
Into my palace, up the guarded stairs
From floor to floor, along the corridors,
Stealthily, with masked eyes, with bated breath,
On tiptoe to the threshold of my room.
That captain of my guard has eyed me strangely
These two nights now; he had an evil look.
He smiled, but still, his eyes they did not smile.
Where is my sword? It's here. Look at that door.
It moved. Was that the wind? Who stands without?
I see you standing there. Come in there, you.
Who is it?

GUARD [*Off*].

The great King's guard is here.
God save the King! And may he live for ever!

AHASUERUS.

Give me a cup of drink. I thirst. I thank you.
You men were sleeping when I called for you.
Sing, that I know you watching till I sleep.

[*The* Soldiers *hum and sing together.*
Ahasuerus *settles to his sleep again.*
He rouses up and walks again.]

There is a something evil in this room;
I seem to give it power by lying down.
It is as though the dark were full of souls
That wait till I am helpless and then come
Out of the corners, out of the air itself,
About my body; but, being up, they fly.
See, there is nothing here. I pass my hand—
[*He goes round feeling the walls.*]
Here, here, and here. I do not like that corner:
Is the thing there? The shadow on the wall
Is like the black head of an African
Thrown back in mockery, and it seems to move—
To move a little forward. It is but shadow.
Yes, you are only shadow on the wall,
Not what you thought.
And yet I know this room
Is living with the spirits of evil things;
Spirits of evil things that I have done.
It is so difficult to be a King,
To wear the crown and to be ringed with death;
To order "Thus," with little time to think,
No time to know, but to be just, far-seeing,
Wise, generous, strict and yet most merciful,

As though one knew.
Now one by one they come,
Those plotters who defied me, whom I killed,
Crucified, burned, impaled, or tore with horses,
Men who with white lips cursed me, going to death.
[*He turns.*]
Yes, you pale ghosts, I mastered you in life,
And will in death. I hold an Empire up,
A thing that IS; no glimmering dream of boys
Or what might be, but will not till men change;
No phantom Paradise of vengeance glutted
By poor men upon rich men, but a world
Rising and doing its work and lying down
Because my fierceness keeps the wolves at bay.
And yet, those Jews, even at my palace door,
So Haman said, have had my death contrived.
What if that Captain be in league with them?
Guard! Is Hydaspes there?

GUARD.

He is here, great King. Hydaspes, the King calls.

[HYDASPES *enters.*]

HYDASPES.

Lord! Do you call?

AHASUERUS.

Come in. Let fall the hanging. Come you there
Into the moonlight, that I see your face.
[HYDASPES *comes down Left.*]
Let me be sure that no one crawls behind you.
Hold out your hands, so; let me see the fingers.
Stay there. No nearer.
You have travelled far?

HYDASPES.

I have been far, among the Indian lands.

AHASUERUS.

And saw strange peoples?

HYDASPES.

Some.

AHASUERUS.

Which were the strangest?

HYDASPES.

Those of Tibet, who made their pence of gold,
And reckoned costly things by cups of water.

AHASUERUS.

What next seemed strange to you?

HYDASPES.

The Tartar horsemen
Who live on cheese of mare's milk and go on
For ever over never-ending grass,
And have no home except the black felt tent
And the great plain and the great sky and silence.

AHASUERUS.

A good life, that, for men. Who, next to those?

HYDASPES.

The race of Sittras by the sacred river;
They are all men, grown grey; no women there.
They have put by their wives and families,
Their crowns, their swords, their households and their cares,
And seek for wisdom there, until they die.

AHASUERUS.

Do they find wisdom?

HYDASPES.

No, but they find peace.

AHASUERUS.

Do they, by Heaven; as a dead man does.
Wisdom is life upon the tickle edge,
Not the blind staring of the stupefied
At nothing out of nothing. I envy you
For travelling thus and seeing all these things,
Which I shall only hear of.
Tell me now,
When you were wandering, did you meet the Jews?

HYDASPES.

No, never, Lord.

AHASUERUS.

Nor heard about their race?

HYDASPES.

Not in the East.

AHASUERUS.

But in the West you have?

HYDASPES.

Yes, here at home.

AHASUERUS.

What have you heard?

HYDASPES.

That they are heathen men,
Brought from beyond the desert in the wars;
Not desert savages, nor civilised,
But enemies of both.

AHASUERUS.

Who told you this?

HYDASPES.

Prince Haman told me.

AHASUERUS.

They are now condemned;
They have been plotting here. You do not know
Any of their rebellious stock, by chance?

HYDASPES.

No, Lord, not one.

AHASUERUS.

Go to that door, Hydaspes.
Is someone listening to us as we speak?

HYDASPES [*Going to door.*]
No, Lord; the guard is at the door beyond.

AHASUERUS.

Come nearer me. That captain of the guard,
Is he a Jew?

HYDASPES.

No, Lord, a Persian, surely,
Pordánatha, from lovely Arisai,
The city white like snow; Persian as you.

AHASUERUS.

Thank you, Hydaspes.
These times are dangerous. Go now from here,
See the guards doubled at Queen Esther's doors.
These Jews are secret like that desert tribe
Whom none has seen, who walk the moonless night
And strike men dead, and go, and leave no trace
Save the dead body.

HYDASPES.

I will place the guards
Myself, great King.

[*Exit* HYDASPES.]

AHASUERUS.

Esther, the Queen, not yet a trusted Queen.
Not lightly can an Emperor put his trust
In man or woman. She is proud, and pride
Is slow to give or take in confidence

How the Queen Vashti comes into my mind!
She disobeyed my order at the feast,
So she is put away, and lives in exile.
How little quiet have I known since then!
Plot, plot and counterplot, and none to comfort,
Nor to advise, as Vashti used to do.
Was it a plot that made her disobey?
I sent Prince Memucan to bring her to me:
He brought back word that she refused to come.
How if Prince Memucan were lying to me?
Misquoting what she said, to make me rage
And put her from her place beside my throne?
For since she went, Prince Memucan has been
About me day and night, and grows in power.
Who are the comrades of Prince Memucan?
Meres, Adathan; but his chiefest friend
Is Haman, my most trusted councillor.
Haman, my friend, to whom I love to give
Princedoms and palaces and silver mines.
And yet, what if the two conspired together
To rid me of the Queen, that they might rule me?
I will send Memucan beyond the seas
Upon some dangerous mission of great honour:
He shall away to-morrow in all haste.

But Haman I can trust.

[*He tries to compose himself to sleep.*]

Princedoms, and palaces, and silver mines,
Pomps, glories, splendours, princedoms, palaces—
Vashti the Queen, and enemies, and princedoms—
A long, long life, and heavy hours of time!

[*He sleeps. A clink of metal to mark passage of time.*]

AHASUERUS [*Starting up.*]

It was not I,
It was the slave Harbonah poisoned him,
Not I. I was not there. I never knew.
Horrible white face with the blotch of death;
Harbonah gave it in the honey cake—
The honey cake, I never gave it you.
I was not at the feast, it is well known
I was most sick that night.

[*He wakes.*]

Merach! Merach! begone! It was not Merach,
But someone at the footing of the bed.
Someone, a Jew, with bones instead of face
And blood that dripped.

[*He gropes at foot of bed. He rises.*]

O blessed night, so full of peace, so calm,
After that horror.

Ah! I know it now,
What the Chaldean told me long ago,
That I should know no quiet rest at night,
Being a King, unless I ate of bread
Baked in a house where sorrow never came.
O blessed bread, would I could eat of thee!
[*Goes Back.*]
Guards! are the gates secure?

[Guards *Off*].

God save the King!
The King's gates are made sure, and the gates' keys
Here, under guard. May the King live for ever!

Ahasuerus.

The sentries on the walls; do they report
All quiet in the city?

Guard.

All, great King.

Ahasuerus.

No armed men moving, no suspicious thing?

Guard.

Nothing, O Son of Heaven, but silent darkness,

And here and there a priest of the great sun
Praying long life and blessing on our Monarch.

AHASUERUS.

Long life, long misery!
It is within this room the horror is—
That thing, that Jew, that thing out of the grave.
No, nothing, nothing! I can see there's nothing.
So—I will sleep. I will repeat that song
Made long ago by one who could not sleep,
To help his fellow-sufferers.

[*Repeats.*]

Along the beach a wave comes slowly in,
And breaks, and dies away, and dies away;
The moon is dimmed and all the ropes are taut.

Along the beach a wave comes slowly in,
And breaks and dies away, and dies away,
It is no season, sailor, to quit port.

Along—etc.

[*He sleeps.*] [*Enter* GHOST OF THARES. *The* GHOST *comes behind* AHASUERUS *and across stage. It stands still and hinnies like a snipe.*]

AHASUERUS [*In his sleep*].

O no! Spare me! Spare me!
Loose me my hands. O they have tied my feet!
I cannot get from bed, and now they come.
Merciful Gods! my thigh-bones are both broken.
I cannot stir. Who is it gibbering there?
Who are you? Who?

THARES [*In a disguised, piping voice*].

The shadow of what I was,
Come for your blood.

AHASUERUS.

I'll give you gold—my kingdom—
But let me go!

THARES [*Creeping slowly across, hands out*].

I cannot, Ahasuerus,
I want your life, the soul out of your body.
See, I come nearer and a little nearer,
A little nearer still, and put out hands—
Lean, skinny hands, that used to serve your food,
Thin hands to put your powerless hands aside
And take you by the throat as now I do,

And squeeze, and squeeze the life out of your flesh!

[*He begins to strangle* AHASUERUS.]

AHASUERUS [*With effort*].

Ah, gods! He kills me! Kills me!
Out, O gods!
Hydaspes! Help!
Hydaspes! Guards! Hydaspes!

[*Exit* THARES, *L.*]

HYDASPES [*R.*].

Lord!

AHASUERUS.

The villain strangled me. It was a dream.
A dreadful dream! And yet I knew his face.
Who was the man? One who made plots against me,
And died, from torture, as a due reward.
Who was the man?
Go, bring the records here,
The wise Chaldeans and the record-writers,
And let them read the records, for I know
The man's name will be there.

[*Exit* HYDASPES.]

It was his spirit.
An evil thing, a harbinger of evil,

A plotter coming as the vulture comes
Before the corpse. But the Chaldean scribes
Will know his name, and by their magicry
Tell me what evil comes.
Thares it was—
Thares, the man was, who was put to death
For plotting with the other, Bigdana.
[*Goes Back.*]
Let pass the wise Chaldeans when they come.

THE GUARD [*Off*].

God save the King! May the King live for ever!

CURTAIN.

NIREUS

I

Once long ago young Nireus was the King
In Symé Island, so the stories say,
And at his birth the gods made holiday
And blessed the child and gave him each one thing—

Courage, and skill, and beauty, and bright eyes,
Wisdom, and charm, and many another power—

So that he grew to manhood like a flower
For beauty, and like God for being wise

Now Nireus' friend was Paris, out of Troy,
Paris, the prince, the archer, who had seen
The goddesses within the forest green,
King Priam's son, a peacock of a boy.

At Sparta's court, not far from Symé Isle,
Bright Helen lived, King Menelaus' Queen,
The loveliest woman that has ever been,
Who made all mortals love her by her smile.

Nireus and Paris went together there
To Helen's palace; and when Nireus saw
Helen the queen, the lovely without flaw,
He loved her like her shadow everywhere.

And Paris, when he saw her with her mate,
Helen, the rose, beside that withered weed,
Loved her no less, but with a young man's greed,
That wants the moon from heaven and cannot wait.

Straightway he wooed Queen Helen to be his,
And won her love, and cried to Nireus then,
"O Nireus, help to save us from this den,
Lend us your ship to bring us out of this."

So Nireus, though his heart was torn with pain,
Well knowing what would come, yet took the pair
To many-towered Troy and left them there
To live in love and be the city's bane.

When Menelaus knew of Helen's flight,
He led all Greece in arms to punish Troy,
Nireus went with him in the fleet, and joy
Ceased in the world, for all men went to fight.

Nine years they fought there in the tamarisk field,
And in the tenth, in some blind midnight stour,
Nireus killed Paris underneath the tower.
Men bore him back to Helen on his shield.

Then Troy was sacked and Menelaus took
Beautiful Helen as his prisoner home
And locked her in his castle as a gnome
Might lock a gem on which no man might look.

Thus Nireus lost his love, and killed his friend,
And knew despair, so going to his ship,
He sailed to where the constellations dip,
In the great west, to look for the world's end.

II

When Troy was sacked and all her towers
  Blazed up and shook into the sky,
Smoke like great trees and flame like flowers,
  And Priam's bodyguard did die.

Then the Queen's women snatched up spears
  And fought their way out of the gate
Seized horses from the charioteers
  And fled like mountain-streams in spate.

They would not stay for slavery
  To some Greek lord until they died,
They rode the forest to be free
  Up, on the peaks of snowy Ide.

And in the forest on a peak
  They hewed a dwelling with the bronze
And lived, unconquered by the Greek,
Fierce, sun-burned women, neither tame nor weak,
  The panther-women called the Amazons.

They lived there on the heights and knew no men.
  Having beheld the lusts of men destroy
  The town of windy Troy,
  They killed all men they met; their only joy
Was hunting for the wild beasts in the glen.

The wild-boar and the many-branching stag,
  Horse-killing panthers hidden by the brook,
The spotted death among the yellow flag,
  All these with their bright spears these women took.
All these, and men, for even to be seen
By men, these hunter women thought unclean.

So no man saw them save a glimpse afar
  Of panther-skins flung back, and swift feet flying,
And the red stag brought low to the fierce Ha!
  Of women's spear-thrusts driven in the dying.
They ruled the crags like wolves, they kept their pride
Savage and sovereign like the snow on Ide.

III

Nireus sailed; and a strange wind blew him to islands unseen before,
  Where the gods sat throned on the crags with peace on their marvellous faces,
Clouds and the smoke of fire, that glittered and changed, they wore;
  And unto them came the crying of all man's sorrowful races.

They cried to him as he passed, "You are seeking and you shall find,
Not in the way you hope, not in the way foreseen,
Out of horror of soul, ache, and anguish of mind,
Out of the desert of all, shall come the leaf that is green."

Then the wind blew on to an island where millet is ever in ear,
And the horses that live in the sea come thronging in thousands to eat,
And the horses that live on the island will never let them come near,
But they fight on the beaches forever with flashing and thunder of feet.

Then he sailed by invisible islands; he smelt the fruit on the trees,
And heard the noise in the shipyards and the crowing of cocks unseen,
Then sheered from the roar of breakers and on over unknown seas
And ever he grieved for Paris, and thought of the beautiful Queen.

He came to the island of sirens, the women whose song was such
That he anchored there for a night to listen and sing reply,

Leaving the sail on its yard, leaving the oar
in its crutch,
A night, as he thought, yet at dawn he
found a year had gone by.

Then he came to a shore where giants were
ranked like a standing wood,
They brought him blood of their gods and
bade him drink at a feast;
And he drank the blood of the gods and
suddenly understood
All that was said and meant in the crying
of bird and beast.

Then the wind blew him forth to an ocean
where islands like heads of kings
Rose in their snows from the sea and cried
as the glacier cries,
Each to the next his tale of secret terrible
things
Not yet known to man's brain nor seen by
his eyes.

And, lo, when he landed for water, the trees
were all men who spoke.
"Nireus," whispered the aspen; "Mur-
derer," muttered the beech.
"Traitor, killer of friends, beware," cried
cedar and oak,
Like the running of storm in the boughs
they cast the threat of their speech.

And the flowers and fruits on the branches
would turn to him as he came,
And, lo, as he looked, they wrought, till out
of the rose or quince,
Helen or Paris peered to give him mocking
or blame,
Crying from delicate heads, "The killer;
the traitor prince."

Then he came to a sea of terror, where mon-
sters rose from the sea,
Things with the beaks of birds and arms
like the suckers of vines,
Things like ghosts in the water coming mo-
tionlessly
To tatter the flesh of men with teeth like
the cactus-spines.

Over unending water ever he held his course,
Birds that were curses followed, crying
around and above,
"Nireus, broken by beauty, broken again by
remorse,
Goes to the breaking of death for killing
his friend and love."

And ever he cursed himself for bringing them
both to wreck.
Helen and Paris, the lovely; and ever the
waves seemed filled

With skull-bones hollow in death that rose
and peered on the deck,
And he thought, "They are those from
Troy whom I in my madness killed.

"Had I refused, when they asked for my
help to escape,
Paris would still be alive, Troy, the city,
would stand,
And all the killed of the war would be tilling
the corn and the grape,
Not ghosts with a curse in the air and torn
bones strewing the land."

So he sailed, but at night in the dark when
the lantern bubbled aloft,
And men lay sleeping, when all save he
were asleep,
And the ship slid on with a gurgle of water
soft
He knew that the dead of Troy came with
him over the deep.

Out of the long-backed roller that slid from
its crest of foam
Gibbered the bloodless dead, white faces
with haggard eyes,
Pointing the bones of their hands at him who
had forced them from home,
Their curses came to his ears like little
twittering cries.

Whenever he moored at an island for water
or food or rest,
Soon those wraiths of the dead would rise
and bid him begone,
To harry the resting gannet out of the
roller's crest
And carry the curse of his soul to the un-
known on and on.

IV

In the grey of morning
When the stars were paling
Nireus sailing
Saw land ahead;
An island shining
With city towers
Where bells were ringing
And men singing.

As Nireus stepped ashore there
He stood staring,
For all men there
Were the dead of the war;
The Greeks and Trojans,
Beautiful and swift,
Killed in the trampled tamarisks
Beneath Troy town.

Stars were in their hair,
Their brows were crowned with violets,
They stepped like stags,
Comrade with comrade.
They had forgotten
The mud and death,
The heat and flies
Of the plain of Troy.

There among them
Came a prince in scarlet
With his hands stretched
In welcoming.
It was Paris, his friend,
Paris whom he killed
In the midnight raid
Beneath Troy wall.

Paris cried,
"Nireus, my comrade,
Nireus, my beloved,
My friend of old.
Here we have forgiven
What my young man's folly bred.
We feast as friends
In the violet fields."

Then he led Nireus
To the hall of feasting.
There they feasted

In the violet fields.
Three summer days and nights,
It seemed, they feasted.
Each summer day and night
Was ten years long.

Paris and the heroes
Cried to Nireus,
"We loved Helen,
When we were men.
Now we love her still,
And we see her lonely,
Old, and haunted
By her lovers dead.

"Take to Helen
Gifts from her lovers,
In her old age find her,
And give her these:
Beauty and peace
And our forgiveness,
And all our thanks
For what she was."

As they ceased speaking,
They faded from him,
The island faded,
Nireus was at sea.
He and his men

Were all grown old,
Thirty years
Had fallen on them.

As old men failing
They came to Sparta,
All unavailing
Their coming was.
Helen was gone,
And none knew whither,
To search for peace
Or to find release.

Over the seas
In lands and islands
Nireus sought her
But could not find.
For the gods retire
What men desire
Though it burn like fire
And make men blind.

V

Full of years and wealth, and evil, Menelaus
died in Sparta,
And Queen Helen at his bedside stood and
looked upon him dead,

He who once had bought her beauty, to be
bride to him, by barter,
He whom she had loathed and fled from,
now lay silenced on the bed.

Bitter thoughts were in her as she looked
upon his meanness,
Thoughts of Paris in his beauty when their
love was at its height,
Paris in his morning, and the King in his
uncleanness,
And this dead mean thing, her master, and
the winner of the fight.

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering,
All was dark, save in the porch
The wind-blown fire of a torch,
And the sentries still as in a stound
With their spear-heads drooped upon the
ground.

Then she thought: "These two men had me,
and a myriad men have sickened
To a fever of a love for me who saw me
passing by:
When they saw me, all their eyes grew bright,
and all their pulses quickened,
And to win me or to keep me they went up
to Troy to die.

"Now the earthly moon, my beauty, and the rose, my youth, have dwindled,
I am old, my hair is grey, and none remembers
What a fire in men's hearts Queen Helen kindled
Ere the fire in Queen Helen turned to embers."

All was silent in the palace of the King,
Save the wind-blown torch-flame guttering,
And a moth that came
Beating with his wings about the flame,
And the sentries drawing breath,
With their spear-heads drooped saluting death.

Then she said: "The gods conspired to give gifts of beauty to me,
And the beauty gave the gift of death to all who came to woo me;
Now of all the men who loved me, none remain,
And of both the men who had me neither knew me—
Surely all my past was evil, for its fruit is bitter pain.

"I will go to some lone island where I am
not made a story,
Where my beauty made no widow, nor no
orphan wanting bread;
Where no human sorrow suffers the disaster
of my glory
And my eyes may lose the vision of the
hauntings of the dead.

"Day and night the dead men haunt me,
whom the madness of my caring
Brought from home and wives and children
to be bones upon the plain;
All the panther-like for beauty, all the lion-
like for daring,
And they lie among the bindweed now,
uncovered by the rain."

All was silent in the palace of the King
Save the soft-foot watchers whispering;
All was dark, save in the porch
The wind-blown fire of a torch,
And the sentries still as in a stound
With their spear-heads drooped upon the
ground.

Then she rose, and cloaked her face, and
hurried swiftly from the city,
And to sea, away from Hellas, but she
dared not show her face,

For the women and the orphans would have killed her without pity;
She had sown her crop of death too far, she found no resting-place.

But in inns where people gathered in the evenings after labour,
Where the shepherd's pipe or viol stirred the blind man to his verse,
Till the hearers swayed and trembled and the rough man touched his neighbour,
They would talk of Troy with sadness, but of Helen with a curse.

VI

After long years, when Helen was riding by night
In storm, in the Ida forest, alone, not knowing the road,
She saw a light in the blackness, she turned to the light,
She came to the fort on the crag, the panther-women's abode.

Hearing her horse's stamp, they brought her into the yard,
Those women fierce from the killing of lion or boar or man;

They came with their torches round her, they stared at her hard,
They knew her for Helen the Queen from whom their sorrows began.

For years they had longed for her coming, to have her to kill,
Her beauty a throat for their knives, her body a prey,
Helen, who ruined their lovers, the root of their ill,
She said, "I am Helen. Avenge yourselves on me. You may."

Still they stared at her there in the torch-light; then one of them said,
"God used you, to bring things to be; evil things to our city,
Evil things to yourself, for your face declares you have paid;
You have come to the truth like ourselves; we take not vengeance, but pity."

Then they welcomed her in to their hold, and when morning broke clear
They rode with her down to the ruins of what had been Troy.

There they left her alone in the wreck of
the thing overdear
That the gods cannot grant to mankind, but
unite to destroy.

VII

Queen Helen left those women of the wood,
She clambered from her horse and stood
again
Even on the very hill where Troy had stood,
Where tamarisk shrubs and broom sprigs
and wild grain
Sprouted from bronze and rib-bones of
men slain.

There was the palace where her love had
been;
Stones blackened by the fire and misplac'd
By roots of vines that fed upon the paste
Of all the pride where she had lived a queen.

Troy was no more than weeds and fire-flaked
stone,
But still the Straits ran roaring to the
south,
And still the never-quiet winds were blown
With scent of meadow-sweet from Simois'
mouth.

Yet now no Greeks were moving on the beaches,
No galleys of the Greeks came oaring in,
Nor did lancer scouts or parties ride the whin
Bringing in or checking convoys from the river's upper reaches
Where the forest pines begin.

And the forges were all gone, and all the fires
Of the camps and burnings of the dead;
And the grinding of the bronze-shod chariot-tyres
Rang no more.
Both in city and on shore
There were no more shouted orders, clash of arms or marchers' tread.

All was manless, now, uncared for; both the streams had left their courses;
There was marsh where corn had grown of old; and there, where Paris lay,
Was an apple-tree with fruit which fed the now wild Trojan horses
That with bright teeth bit each other.
Earth made Greek and Trojan brother;
All the passion that had raged there now was dead and gone away.

Then she cried, "I caused the quarrel that
brought death along these beaches;
I alone made Troy this ruin, I alone, from
haste of youth,
From a woman's bent, that listens to a lie, if
it beseeches.
Now I stand here old and friendless, having
nothing but the truth."

There she stopped, for there, before her, in
the ruins, stood a stranger:
"This is changed, indeed," he told her,
"since I stood here once before:
Then it flamed all red to heaven and it rang
with death and danger,
And I stood here with noble Agamemnon
In the thunder of the ending of the war."

Something in the old man's bearing made her
start and catch her breath.
"You are Nireus, friend," she answered;
"you are he who brought me here,
When my life and love were dear:
Then I came to life and loving, now I come
to grief and death.

"There is no small grass, in plain or water,
But grows from the body of one killed
By the deadly love of me, who am Helen,
Leda's daughter;

All the young and swift and lovely, all the
quick of heart, are stilled,
I was cause of their going to the slaughter.

"Daylong and nightlong their shadows pur-
sue me with evil,
Haunting my thought in the day, killing
my rest in the night,
Now they have drawn me here; their multi-
tudinous devil
Bids me die where I sinned.
I hear their cry in the wind,
I see their eyes in the light."

Nireus answered, "Ah, not thus, not so, Queen
Helen, surely,
Are those who died for love of you, to
win you or to keep.
If they gave their lives, they gave them, as
a man gives, frankly, purely,
Without question, comment or com-
plaint,
The strong heart equal with the faint,
All content to see your beauty and to tread
hard ways to sleep.

"Now they know that your beauty made
them splendid
Splendid to the death, for I have seen,

Seen and talked, beloved Helen, with the souls of those who ended
In the ruins of this city that has been,
And they praise your name, they count you still their queen.

"Now, come with me, for the ship waits to receive you,
The wind is fair to Symé; let us start.
Here, where long ago I lost you, I retrieve you,
Let us leave this town of broken heart
For the peace of Symé harbour and the mirth of Symé mart
And the calm of knowing sorrow at an end
And the quiet of the memory of a friend."

Then they sailed for Symé island, and the gods were with their going,
For their beauty came upon them both, with youth and strength and peace.
Now they rule and live forever in a spring forever blowing
High in Symé where the sun is bright and skylarks never cease.

Once we were masters of the arts of men.
Poetry, music, painting, building, all
Beautiful noble arts were ours then,
Decking this England as for festival.

A son of England could not lift his head
Then without knowing rapture of delight.
The English hedgerow rose of beauty shed
Into all English hearts its red and white.

Our current coins bore then the sacred stamp
Of style in the used thing. In the world's tower
In space's darkness, England was a lamp.
Her lovely brain beheld; her hand had power

In these two things alone, her spirit shows
Her Saint was then Saint George, her mark, a rose.

Builded in every village in the land,
Cut in the lasting stonework, you will find
Marvellous relics that an English hand
Left as the tokens of an English mind.

Their spires (rough stone translated) lift aloft,
Their gargoyles grin, their bells, in belfries dark,

Still dole the time by hours to the croft,
Columns still bear the towers and are stark.

Over all England beauty was like June
Deep in men's spirits, when we made these things,
Nightingales, dew, the dogrose and the moon,
Beauty of queens, authority of kings,

And faith of men, all merged, that centuries on
Eternal things should shine as then they shone.

I saw the work of all the world displayed,
The thinkers of the theatres of earth
Sent, to be shown the utmost they had made,
Much of it mad, much pleasant, some of worth.

But, worthiest of it all, this English man's
Stood out supreme, as, in a paling sky,
When stars go out, the morning planet scans
Our twilit world with an untroubled eye.

There the work stood for England, and made mute
Our enemies who mocked us with decay;
There was a life's devotion come to fruit,
Enduring beauty keeping death at bay.

Here is the work. Who, greater than his age,
Will use this work to consecrate the stage?

I cannot tell who will, but only know
That faithful work was never yet forlorn.
The best abides, the lusts and fashions go,
Time and the grasses cover over scorn.

By unexpected ways despaired-of things
Come into being after hope has ceast.
Over our fainting shoulders there are wings,
By unseen hands our harvest is increast.

Here in our darkness now the powers of light
Stir us to change this land that we have filled
With squalor and with nightmare and with night,
To Beauty's self; they summon to rebuild,

Rebuild in beauty on the burnt-out coals,
Not to the heart's desire, but the soul's.

* * * * *

I saw the racer coming to the jump
Staring with fiery eyeballs as he rusht;
I heard the blood within his body thump,
I saw him launch, I heard the toppings crusht.

And as he landed I beheld his soul
Kindle, because, in front, he saw the Straight
With all its thousands roaring at the goal,
He laughed, he took the moment for his mate.

Would that the passionate moods on which we ride
Might kindle thus to one-ness with the will;
Would we might see the end to which we stride,
And feel, not strain in struggle, only thrill,

And laugh like him and know in all our nerves
Beauty, the spirit, scattering dust and turves.

BEAUTY

When soul's companion fails,
When flesh (that neighed once) ails,
When body shortens sails,

O soul, break through the netting
Of failing and forgetting,
See clearer for sun-setting;

See clearer, and be cheerly,
See thou the image clearly,
Love thou the image dearly.

For out of love and seeing
Beauty herself has being,
  Beauty our queen;
Who with calm spirit guards us
And with dear love rewards us
  In courts forever green.